

THE THEOLOGICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL DYNAMICS OF
TRANSFORMATION IN THE RECOVERY FROM
THE DISEASE OF ALCOHOLISM

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PREFACE

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ABSTRACT

The pervasiveness of alcoholism in our society inevitably involves the pastor in his/her ministry. The nature and effectiveness of pastoral involvement is contingent upon his/her ability to address the issue from a comprehensively informed perspective.

Purpose - The dissertation has a two-fold purpose. The first is to explicate the manner in which the psycho-social-theological dynamics of transformation can be conceptualized from an integrative perspective. The second purpose is to indicate how the informed and involved pastor can play a strategic role in the transformation process.

Methodology - Material was drawn from three primary sources. The first is the literature addressing the multi-faceted aspects of alcoholism including the publications of the self help groups of Alcoholics Anonymous and Al-Anon. The second source was the theology and tradition of the Lutheran Church. The third source was the observations and learnings drawn from a decade of pastoral experience and two units of clinical pastoral education in working with alcoholics and their families. The phenomenon of transformation in recovery is examined from these three perspectives and the impact of each is considered for the integrative process. Practical insights for pastoral care evolved from the study as a consequence.

Conclusions - A number of specific theoretical and practical conclusions were reached on the basis of this study. These specific conclusions can be subsumed under the following comprehensive statements.

1. Transformation in the recovery from alcoholism is a gift of grace. It is a processive phenomenon incorporating the reality of the past, the actuality of the present and the potentiality of the future.

2. The recovery approach of Alcoholics Anonymous provides a solid psycho-social-theological foundation and framework for the pastor to work with the family system.

3. The informed and involved pastor, as theologian and counselor, can function strategically in facilitating the transformation process through identification, intervention, and prevention of the addictive cycle.

INTRODUCTION

The very nature of human life is that it is subject to change, both voluntary and involuntary, as individuals and groups engage in the process of living. People in the helping professions are concerned that the change be of a salutary nature, that is, that it lend itself to newness and wholeness for the individual and his/her social network as well as for society. The specific focus of this dissertation is two-fold as it relates to the change process in recovering from alcoholism.

The first is to explicate the manner in which the psycho-social-theological dynamics of change are integrated. The second purpose is to expressly state how the informed pastor can play a strategic role in this process.

The model of recovery which best lends itself to this two-fold purpose is that advocated by Alcoholics Anonymous. It recognizes both the psycho-social aspects of alcoholism as well as the importance of the spiritual dimension. The dissertation will explicate, critique and elaborate upon this foundational theory and indicate the manner in which the pastor can utilize this approach in his/her pastoral ministry. The dissertation will contribute to theory building by addressing the nature of the integrative process of the social sciences and theology. It will also make a contribution to practical theology by noting how the pastor may functionally implement this theory in his/her ministry.

The approach addressed in this dissertation is not the only

method for dealing with alcoholism. Researchers in behaviorism in the past decade in particular have given attention to alcoholism as acquired or learned behavior.¹ This approach constitutes a major departure from the traditional posture of Alcoholics Anonymous. A comprehensive explication of the learning behavior theory is provided by Pattison et al.² and has been further refined by his associates.³ These researchers challenge the basic assumptions of A.A. with respect to the irreversible nature of alcoholism. Empirical data has been gathered to address the issue of possibly returning to controlled drinking as a viable alternative to abstinence.⁴ This approach would provide an option for those individuals who do not relate to the A.A. program and opens up new possibilities for dealing with problematic drinking behavior. It is an area of scientific development which should command the attention of all professionals in the field. Additional aspects of this approach are addressed later in chapter one.

The purpose of the dissertation however, is not to compare methodologies in dealing with alcoholism; but to focus on the approach which provides the most fertile soil for integrating the social sciences and theology within the context of pastoral care.

¹Roger E. Vogler et al., "Learning Techniques for Alcohol Abuse," Behavioral Research and Therapy 15 (1977) 31-38.

²E. Mansell Pattison et al., Emerging Concepts of Alcohol Dependence (New York: Springer, 1977)

³Mark B. and Linda C. Sobell, Behavioral Treatment of Alcohol Problems (New York: Plenum Press, 1978)

⁴Roger E. Vogeler et al., "The Referral Problem in the Field of Alcohol Abuse," Journal of Community Psychology 4 (1976) 357-361.

Structurally the dissertation will address itself to five questions concerning the transformation process in recovering from alcoholism. These questions which comprise the five major parts are:

- 1) What are the dynamic processes which are operative in the alcoholic and family which require transformation?
- 2) What insights can be gained from the literature concerning the dynamics of transformation?
- 3) What are the dynamics operative in Alcoholics Anonymous and Al-Anon which make them a successful social paradigm of recovery and transformation?
- 4) What theological dynamics are involved in a faith understanding of transformation?
- 5) What role can the informed and involved pastor play in the transformation process?

These questions are posed in order to provide a comprehensive framework for the dissertation. The focal point is transformation and each of the chapters engages the issue from a different perspective to provide a comprehensive view.

The structure is designed to provide a sequential rationale for addressing the issue. Part One deals with the nature and dynamics of the disease as it manifests itself in the individual and the family system. Before one can effectively work with the process it is imperative to recognize its marks. Part Two deals with the theorizing concerning the transformation process as explicated by Dr. Harry Tiebout. In Part Three, theory is translated into practice in the self-help groups of A.A. and Al-Anon. These organizations provide a living model of a social paradigm of recovery. In Part Four, the perspective of religion as it relates to transformation is addressed. A biblical paradigm, the psychology of religion as well as Christian

theology from a Lutheran perspective are considered. Finally, in Part Five the role of the pastor is lifted up as being strategic as theory is translated into practice of ministry.

Methodologically, material will be drawn from existing sources which address the issue of change and transformation in the alcoholic and in his/her family or social network. A second source of material will be the theological tradition of the church. A third source of information is that assimilated personally in a decade of pastoral experience coupled with two units of clinical pastoral education in chemical dependency units. Theological training and reflection combined with clinical experience facilitates the synthesizing process necessary for a dissertation of this nature.

Articulation of the major assumptions which guide the development of the topic are in order. They are as follows:

- 1) Alcoholism is a major social problem which merits the cooperative energy, efforts and expertise of the helping professions.
- 2) Alcoholism is a social disease. The World Health Organization (1957), the American Medical Association (1968) and the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (1974) have defined alcoholism as a disease and illness.
- 3) Alcoholism has an identifiable symptomatology which is progressive in nature and fatal in consequence.
- 4) Alcoholism affects the entire family system and social matrix in which the alcoholic lives.
- 5) Alcoholism is a treatable disease and recovery for the alcoholic and his/her family system is possible.
- 6) Alcoholism involves physiological, psychological, social and spiritual aspects of the person and family and therefore requires a wholistic approach.

These are principle assumptions in theory and practice which undergird

the process investigated in this dissertation.

The definition of transformation in this presentation is that it is a process initiated by God or a Higher Power which results in a radical reversal of self perception and lifestyle. God is imaged as the benevolent Power of life and love who invites the alcoholic and family to abandon their existence in misery and bondage. God provides the power to effect liberation and the alcoholic and family respond by trusting this power which produces both internal and external change. The freedom to reject the Divine initiative is a prerogative which the alcoholic and family may choose to exercise. The offer remains firm even when the option is declined. If the alcoholic and family are open to the transforming power, the shape and speed of the process is determined by their honesty and openness to a new future.

Because the transformation process is dynamic, it defies rigid codification. However, an identifiable pattern begins to emerge from a distillation of case studies and personal experiences which help to give shape to some of the key steps in the process. These key factors will be developed in the dissertation and are as follows:

- 1) A substantial period of time, often years, passes before the accumulated pain, problems and dis-ease with alcoholism prompts the alcoholic or family member to acknowledge that a problem exists.
- 2) The necessity for change or transformation as a prerequisite for recovery inevitably elicits strong resistance from the individual and family system. Resistance is noted by the presence of:
 - a) denial on the part of the alcoholic and/or family that a problem exists.
 - b) fear of the future involving a radically different lifestyle and relationships.
 - c) dread of upsetting the prevailing system despite its pain.

- 3) The transformation process involves a turning point or conversion which transforms the person's unconscious as well as conscious processes.
- 4) The principle dynamic involves surrender of a defiant and egocentric lifestyle. There is a dying to self and rising to new life for the afflicted and the affected in the family system.
- 5) An awareness and acknowledgment of God or Higher Power as a transpersonal resource who initiates and sustains the transformation process is integral to understanding recovery from this perspective.
- 6) The efficacy of the transformation process is determined by continuing sobriety with serenity. Abstinence is the first step of the process. Living serenely and coping constructively with life is the purpose of the process.
- 7) Sustained sobriety with serenity requires a strong commitment to the program of recovery. The Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous succinctly states, "Half measures availed us nothing. We stood at the turning point. We asked His protection and care with complete abandon."⁵
- 8) The transformation process remains dynamically alive through the stimulus and support of a significant social group.

The word change is not adequate to describe the process of radical reversal which the alcoholic and family experience. The word transformation has been intentionally selected because it conveys the sense of profound metamorphosis which is experienced. The radical reversal of perception and lifestyle or metanoia, to use a biblical term, revolutionizes life and sets it in a new and hopeful direction.

This process does often occur in A.A. without the presence of a pastor. However, the pastor who is involved and informed can play a strategic role. Transformation is not only a psycho-social reorientation, but also an experience of grace in action. The pastor

⁵Alcoholics Anonymous (New York: Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, 1955) 59.

can exercise his/her historic roles as healer, sustainer, one who guides and reconciles,⁶ as well as assuming new roles in relationship to the transformation process as addressed in Part Five. As a key person in the community of faith, the pastor can be instrumental in shepherding many individuals and families through the dark valley of alcoholism to a bright new day of sobriety with serenity.

Two editorial concerns are to be noted. The first is that inclusive language has been used in the text of the dissertation, but it is frequently absent where direct quotations are made from other sources. The quotations have been preserved for the sake of accuracy, but I am sensitive to and aware of the offensiveness of non-inclusive language to many people of both sexes and regret that inclusive language has not been used.

The second editorial concern involves reference to the alcoholic and his/her family system. It is recognized that not all alcoholics have a family in the traditional sense of the word. Family is therefore often used in a generic sense to include any and all significant other persons who have a relationship to the alcoholic. This may be a friend on the street, a bartender or an associate on the job. All people who have significant contact are affected by the drinking as well as the recovery process.

The writing of this dissertation is undertaken with a great deal of enthusiasm and emotional investment. As a pastor who has been privileged to participate in the transformation process with a variety

⁶Charles Jaeckle and William A. Clebsch, Pastoral Care in Historical Perspective (New York: Aronson, 1975) 32-66.

of families, its fascination grows with each occurrence. Not only the family, but the pastor is born anew each time the power of God is at work in the lives of people. The transformation process is experienced, but never totally explained; accepted for what it is, but never totally accounted for; observable, but not objectively definable in conventional scientific categories. It is a process which has worked in the past, is presently working in the lives of thousands of people and will continue to work in the future.

PART ONE

TRANSFORMATION AND THE DYNAMICS OF ALCOHOLISM

CHAPTER I

THE ALCOHOLIC AND ALCOHOLISM - DEFINITIONS AND THEORIES

A. INTRODUCTION TO PART ONE

'Helpless' and 'hopeless' are epithets which characterize the alcoholic in the eyes of the general public. The clergy likewise fall victim to this pervasive 'hopeless' syndrome and experience a great deal of frustration and a sense of futility in ministering to the alcoholic and his/her family or social network. It is not sufficient to proclaim a Gospel of hope and then engage in wishful thinking that this disease and its concomitant manifestations will disappear. Hope must become incarnate in the person of the pastor who has been given the opportunity and responsibility of ministering to the alcoholic and family. Pastors have the rich resources of theology and tradition to utilize in their ministry. Application of these resources in ministering to the alcoholic and family are desperately needed. The language of faith coupled with love in action can serve the pastor well. It is urgent that pastors understand the dynamics of alcoholism and the process of recovery from a psychological and theological perspective. By virtue of office and training, the pastor is in a unique and strategic position to provide care for the alcoholic and family.

In order to deal effectively with the disease in relationship to the process of transformation, it is imperative that the pastor be familiar with the dynamics of the illness as it comes to expression in

the individual person and his/her family or social system. It is also important to be aware of the attitudes and disposition of society as a whole in relationship to alcohol and alcoholism. Alcoholism is a social disease and the complicity of the total social network needs to be articulated. Even as other diseases do not develop in isolation from the bacteria or virus which occasion them, so also alcoholism does not develop in a vacuum, but rather in the social matrix.

Transformation is necessary on several levels. It is necessary for the person afflicted with alcoholism as well as those in his/her social system who are affected. Ultimately there needs to be a transformation in social attitudes toward the usage of alcohol as well as a transformation in disposition towards the alcoholic and alcoholism.

In the light of these pastoral concerns, Part One will consider initially the nature of alcoholism by lifting up definitions and etiological theories from the literature to gain a perspective from the past. Secondly, the social interactionist approach will be presented as the basis for this dissertation's understanding of alcoholism. Finally, the dynamics of conflict will be explicated as the manner in which alcoholism comes to expression in the individual person. Particular attention will be devoted to considering how these dynamics in the person affect and relate to the social system in which s/he lives.

B. DEFINITIONS OF THE ALCOHOLIC AND ALCOHOLISM

It is difficult to definitively determine who the alcoholic is

who is in need of the transformation process. Howard Clinebell proposes this definition,

An alcoholic is anyone whose drinking interferes frequently or continually with any of his important life adjustments and interpersonal relationships.¹

Marty Mann says, "An alcoholic is a very sick person, victim of an insidious, progressive disease, which all too often ends fatally."²

Strecker and Chambers suggest that,

...the abnormal drinker is the man who cannot face reality without alcohol, and whose adequate adjustment to reality is impossible as long as he uses alcohol.³

E.M. Jellinek says, "The alcohol addict has a compulsive dependence on alcohol growing out of endogenous personality factors."⁴ Jellinek goes on to state that these factors involve the total person in the disease process, not just one aspect of his/her personality.

Definitions of alcoholism range from the very detailed and complex such as refined by Gordon Barnes⁵ to the very broad and simple such as that suggested by Father Joseph Martin who suggests that an alcoholic is "...anyone whose drinking causes problems."⁶

¹Howard J. Clinebell, Jr., Understanding and Counseling the Alcoholic (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1968) 119.

²Marty Mann, New Primer on Alcoholism (New York: Rinehart, 1958) 17.

³Edward A. Strecker and Francis T. Chambers, Alcohol: One Man's Meat (New York: Macmillan, 1938) 35.

⁴Elvin M. Jellinek, The Disease Concept of Alcoholism (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1960) 16.

⁵Gordon E. Barnes, "Characteristics of the Clinical Alcoholic Personality," Journal of Studies on Alcoholism 41:9 (1980) 894-910.

⁶Father Joseph Martin, Nebraska School of Alcohol Studies. Kearney, NE, 1975.

My definition of an alcoholic is a person who suffers from a lifestyle disorder characterized by compulsive drinking of alcohol which creates disruption in his/her social system. Drinking alcoholically affects not only the individual, but his/her family, social life, physical health, economic status, occupation, legal situation and spiritual life. Drinking alcoholically can affect one or all of the aforementioned aspects of human existence.

It is important to make the distinction between the alcoholic and the disease of alcoholism. The disease has a number of identifiable components which can be treated because of their commonality. The alcoholic, on the other hand, is the individual who has the disease of alcoholism which is uniquely manifested in his/her personal and social existence. Alcoholism is related to the person's behavior and disposition and the manner in which s/he reacts to life experiences.

His activity which we describe as alcoholism is the outward manifestation or symptom of a breakdown in his morale and his emotional and mental health. He is ill physically, mentally and spiritually. His condition is the result of his own reaction to a series of experiences.⁷

Elizabeth Whitney states that alcoholism has the following components.

"The essential elements of alcoholism are found in the use of alcoholic beverages that cause the individual trouble in family, economic, spiritual, social, physical and mental areas."⁸ Morris Chafetz says,

⁷Thomas J. Shipp, Helping the Alcoholic and His Family (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966) 50.

⁸Elizabeth D. Whitney, The Lonely Sickness (Boston: Beacon Press, 1965) 16.

Alcoholism is a chronic behavioral disorder, manifested by an undue preoccupation with alcohol to the detriment of physical and/or mental health, a loss of control when drinking has begun, (although it may not be carried to the point of intoxication) and by a self-destructive attitude in dealing with personal relationships and life situations.⁹

These definitions are indicative of the variety of understandings regarding who the alcoholic is and the nature of the disease termed alcoholism.

My definition of alcoholism is that it is a lifestyle disorder comprised of physical, psychological, social and spiritual components which brings dis-ease to the individual and his/her social system. A comprehensive definition is necessary because of the complexity of alcoholism and its extensive impact personally and socially. A review of the etiological theories reveals the disparate perceptions with regard to the origin of alcoholism. Each theory contributes an important perspective to the understanding of alcoholism, but none is sufficiently comprehensive to encompass all dimensions of the disease. A survey of the major theories is presented to both illustrate the complexity of alcoholism as well as to gain insight from the truth each theory presents. This will contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the theological and psychological dynamics of alcoholism and the dynamics of transformation which are necessary for recovery. The major theories are as follows:

⁹Morris E. Chafetz, "Motivation for Recovery in Alcoholism," in Ruth Fox (ed.) Alcoholism (New York: Springer, 1967) 110.

C. ETIOLOGICAL THEORIES

1. Learning Theory

Researchers such as Conger,¹⁰ Kepner¹¹ and Kingham¹² postulate that alcoholism is learned behavior. More recent interest has already been noted in the introduction with reference to Vogler, Weissbach and Compton who write,

Learning approaches to alcohol abuse have become increasingly popular (e.g., Bigelow et al, 1972; Bigelow and Liebson, 1972; Gaudill and Marlatt, 1975; Emrick, 1974, 1975; Griffiths, Bigelow and Liebson, 1974; Hamburg, 1975; Mendelson, Mello and Solomon, 1968; Nathan and Briddell, 1976; Nathan and O'Brien, 1971; Silverstein, Nathan and Taylor, 1974; Vogler et al, 1971; Vogler et al, 1970).¹³

The person learns that problems seem easier to cope with when beverage alcohol has been consumed. Varying amounts of time are needed depending upon the individual before s/he crosses that imperceptible and invisible line between social and addictive drinking. Albert Bandura contends that alcoholism is maintained through positive reinforcement which results from the central depressant and anesthetic

¹⁰J.J. Conger, "Reinforcement Theory and the Dynamics of Alcoholism," Quarterly Journal of Studies on Alcoholism 17 (1956) 296-305.

¹¹E. Kepner, "Application of Learning Theory to the Etiology and Treatment of Alcoholism," Quarterly Journal of Studies on Alcoholism 25 (1964) 279-291.

¹²R. Kingham, "Alcoholism and the Reinforcement Theory of Learning," Quarterly Journal of Studies on Alcoholism 19 (1958) 320-330.

¹³Roger E. Vogler et al., "Learning Techniques for Alcohol Abuse," Behavioral Research and Therapy 15 (1977) 31.

properties of alcohol.¹⁴ It would seem that the reinforcement theory would prove deficient when the consequences of drinking outweigh the advantages and pleasures, but such is not necessarily the case as the research on intermittent reinforcement illustrates. This issue is taken up by Conger who postulates two possibilities with regard to reinforcement.

The first is the learning principle of the gradient of reinforcement. Immediate reinforcements are more powerful than delayed ones. Hence the immediate reduction in anxiety or fear more than compensates for the punitive consequences which may later ensue. The second consideration is the drive factor. If the drive is strong enough, the drive-reducing effects of alcohol may outweigh the consequent punitive attitudes of others. This insight meshes with my own pastoral experience. Despite the projected consequences, the alcoholic nevertheless drinks. Rational appeals, threats, scare tactics and condemnation are exercises in futility. The alcoholic cannot not drink to use a popular phrase from recovering people.

The learning approach has a significant contribution to make to the understanding of the disease and the recovery process. One recovering alcoholic stated it succinctly in this manner, "We alcoholics need to act our way into right thinking, not think our way into right acting." The major criticism of the learning theory is that it does not take sufficient account of the nature of physiological addiction. Anyone who has observed an alcoholic in withdrawal will realize that

¹⁴Albert Bandura, Principles of Behavior Modification (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1969) 533.

modifying behavior is not the total answer to addiction nor is it the only causative factor from an etiological perspective.

2. Psychoanalytic Theory

Sigmund Freud speculated that alcoholism was caused by latent homosexual orientations or an attempt at sublimating homosexual feelings. The anesthetic properties of alcohol would cover up those feelings. The psycho-sexual orientation is championed by Jones,¹⁵ Levy,¹⁶ and Small and Leach.¹⁷ Roebuck and Kessler trace the origin of alcoholism to oral passivity and regression. Alcoholics have in common with other addicts oral and narcissistic premorbid personalities.

Genital organization breaks up and regression begins. The various points of fixation determine which field of infantile sexuality comes to the fore; in the end, the libido remains an unorganized amorphous tension energy.¹⁸

Eva Blum accentuates the issue of anal fixation and the problem of dependency. She states,

Retrospective studies support the thesis that mismanagement of the early dependency situation perpetuates it, hence is a predisposing element in the genesis of alcoholism.¹⁹

¹⁵Howard Jones, Alcoholic Addiction (London: Tavistock, 1963)

¹⁶Robert I. Levy, "The Psychodynamic Functions of Alcohol," Quarterly Journal of Studies on Alcoholism 19 (1958) 649-659.

¹⁷Edward J. Small, Jr., and Barry Leach, "Counseling Homosexual Alcoholics," Journal of Studies on Alcoholism 38:11 (1977) 2077.

¹⁸Julian B. Roebuck and Raymond G. Kessler, The Etiology of Alcoholism (Springfield, IL: Thomas, 1972) 62-63.

¹⁹Eva Marie Blum, "Psychoanalytic Views on Alcoholism," Quarterly Journal of Studies on Alcoholism 27:2 (1966) 265.

The psychoanalytic theory emphasizes the in-depth intrapsychic conflicts of the alcoholic with his/her problems of primary narcissism. This is an important component in compiling a composite picture of conflict, but cannot be isolated as the sole criterion. Howard Clinebell assesses the psychoanalytic theory of etiology by stating that,

Although many alcoholics are sexually maladjusted and some homosexual, it seems likely that these sexual problems are more adequately understood as symptoms, like the person's alcoholism of underlying personality problems. However, one who is counseling alcoholics should bear in mind that their sexual problems may complicate and aggravate their alcoholic problems and vice versa.²⁰

The psychoanalytic theory fails to take sufficient cognizance of the social, physiological and spiritual factors of alcoholism.

3. Social Cultural Theory

Rupert Wilkinson²¹ focuses on the sociological aspects of alcoholism by stressing the importance of social attitudes and cultural backgrounds which determine consumption. Filstead, Rossi and Keller²² likewise have given attention to this dimension. Early work with alcoholics and alcoholism revolved primarily around the individual and his/her recovery. Little attention was given to the social matrix and the norms governing consumption. Orcutt, Cairl and Miller working

²⁰Clinebell, 56.

²¹Rupert Wilkinson, The Prevention of Drinking Problems (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970)

²²William M. Filstead, et al. (eds.) Alcohol and Alcohol Problems (Cambridge: Ballinger, 1976)

in social theory researched the attitudes of professionals working with alcoholics in the area of law enforcement. They also tested non-professionals to determine their attitudes. Even though attitudes have improved in recent years, they concluded that, "... the stigma of alcoholism has not been removed."²³

A growing concern among professionals is the wider systemic issue of cultural, social and ethnic attitudes. The impact of cultural expectations and social exposure and pressure are all fertile and fruitful areas for further investigation. The social theory does not take sufficient account of the physiological and spiritual dimensions of alcoholism and thus lacks the necessary comprehensive scope in determining etiology. Nonetheless it remains as one of the most exciting areas of current research.

4. Physio-Pharmacological Theory

E.M. Jellinek was a pioneer in establishing physiology and pharmacology as a viable theory of etiology. A significant section of the book on alcoholism edited by Catanzaro²⁴ is devoted to dealing with the accumulated technical data regarding this theory. Alcoholics Anonymous has referred to alcoholism as a physical allergy stemming from the particular chemical composition of the individual. This approach removes the issue from the arena of moralism.

²³James D. Orcutt, et al, "Professional and Public Conceptions of Alcoholism," Journal of Studies on Alcoholism 41:7 (1980) 660.

²⁴Ronald S. Catanzaro (ed.) Alcoholism (Springfield, IL: Thomas, 1968)

Studies have been conducted dealing with the probabilities of genetic transmission and the possibilities of particular physiological body chemistries which may indicate a propensity to alcoholism. Conclusive evidence at this point in the research has failed to materialize, but the quest continues. Evidence of the intensity of this research may be noted in the prodigious work of physicians who are searching for the physio-pharmacological key to alcoholism as noted in two recent volumes edited by Frank A. Seixas.²⁵ Isolating a physiological component would be most helpful in both the treatment and prevention of alcoholism, but this theory does not take sufficient cognizance of the social and spiritual dimensions.

5. Personality Profile Theory

Some researchers have devoted attention to the development of human personality as a clue to the origin of alcoholism. The intent is to present a personality profile which is characteristic of alcoholics. The psychology of human development within the social framework is given the greatest emphasis in this approach. Howard Clinebell isolates ten psychological attributes present in 'enlarged proportions' in alcoholics, namely: high level of anxiety in interpersonal relationships, emotional immaturity, ambivalence toward authority, low frustration tolerance, grandiosity, low self-esteem, feelings of isolation, perfectionism, guilt and compulsiveness.²⁶

²⁵Frank A. Seixas (ed.), Currents in Alcoholism, III/IV (New York: Grune and Stratton, 1978)

²⁶Clinebell, 53.

Gordon Barnes points to four personality characteristics in clinical alcoholics namely stimulus augmenting, field dependence, weak ego and anxiety.²⁷ He cites numerous empirical studies to support his approach. Ford characterizes the pattern of the personality as a person who is a 'turner-away-from life'²⁸ who seeks oblivion because s/he has problems relating to other people. Disappointed with life and the failure to fulfill expectations results in becoming a compulsive dependent. Strecker sees the alcoholic as desiring to regress, one who is introverted and who has a neurotic nucleus in that s/he cannot seem to live with himself/herself or others. This situation is compounded by a faulty reading and appraisal of reality issuing in inappropriate thoughts, attitudes and behavior.²⁹ Harold Lovell reports immaturity, frustraton and fear as the basic traits of the alcoholic.³⁰ Dr. Vernelle Fox sees the alcoholic personality as one who cannot adequately cope with the dynamics of guilt, grief and isolation.³¹

This approach is most helpful in providing behavioral clues for diagnosis and explicating the dynamics of personality from an intrapsychic and interpersonal perspective. The nagging problem still

²⁷Barnes, 894.

²⁸Fred B. Ford, "Dear Parson: An Open Letter about your Alcoholic," in his The Alcoholic (TS) (Newton Centre, MA: Andover Newton Department of Psychology, n.d.) 3.

²⁹Strecker and Chambers, 16-22.

³⁰Harold W. Lovell, "Hope and Help for the Alcoholic," in Ford, 22-27.

³¹Vernelle Fox, "The Dynamics of Alcoholism," Long Beach General Hospital Lecture, Long Beach, CA, 27 June 1979.

exists as to whether these personality predispositions were a part of the developing person which occasioned the alcoholism or whether the alcoholism is the root cause of these kinds of personality traits. Neither position to date has been conclusively demonstrated from the empirical data available. This fact is noted by Blum and Blum³² as well as Gordon Barnes³³ in their research conclusions. This important issue remains a critical area for continuing research.

Personality theory needs to take note of the physiological and spiritual dimensions of alcoholism as also being prime contributors to the disease. Placing the etiology of alcoholism in a theory of personality development is not sufficiently comprehensive to account for the disease.

D. SUMMARY OF INSIGHTS

Several important insights emerge as a result of considering definitions and etiological theories.

The first is that alcoholism is a complex phenomenon not attributable to a single cause. Ebbe Hoff states,

...it is impossible to define alcoholism in terms of unitary etiology with characteristics medical and psychological pathology and a clinical course referable to a confident theory of causes. As has been stated, it is not yet possible to say to what extent alcohol itself is a cause of alcoholism.³⁴

³²Eva Marie Blum and Richard H. Blum, Alcoholism (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1967) 39ff.

³³Barnes, 908.

³⁴Ebbe Hoff, "Nature and Causes of Alcoholism," in Pastoral Care Function of the Congregation: To the Alcoholic and his Family (TS) (New York: National Council of Churches, 1962) 18.

Yvelin Gardner says that physiologists emphasize physical dysfunction, psychiatrists the emotional problems and clergy the spiritual aspects. Therefore alcoholism is "...a tripartite illness: the type of illness which obviously needs treatment of the whole person."³⁵ Howard Blane writes,

The most commonly held contemporary notion about what causes alcoholism is that it is a product of multiple influences that derive not only from personal-historical sources, but from physiological, social and cultural influences as well.³⁶

The comprehensive definition of alcoholism suggested earlier in this paper is substantiated by the holistic approach advocated by Hoff, Gardner and Blane.

A second insight is that for the alcoholic, alcohol is not the problem but rather the solution to the problems of life. Alcohol, as a depressant, provides the anesthetizing effect to assuage the pain of the individual. Drinking becomes a way of life, a solution for coping with the pressures. Keller notes that,

...without understanding what is really causing the anxiety and what was really happening when he drank, he experienced that alcohol worked in a way that nothing or no one else ever had.³⁷

The alcoholic drinks for effect and finds that ingestion of beverage alcohol produces marvelous results. When the alcoholic crosses that invisible and imperceptible line from social drinking to addictive consumption, the alcohol suddenly turns into an enemy and betrayer. Blane writes,

³⁵Yvelin Gardner, "The Pastor's Use of Community Resource in Helping the Alcoholic," Pastoral Psychology 13:123 (1962) 40.

³⁶Howard T. Blane, The Personality of the Alcoholic (New York: Harper & Row, 1968) 6.

³⁷John Keller, Ministering to Alcoholics (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1966) 11.

The alcoholic drinks not because he wants to kill himself; he drinks to preserve himself and to maintain his integrity. That prolonged excessive drinking ultimately destroys rather than preserves, decomposes rather than maintains integrity, that its effects are opposite to those the drinker seeks through it are among the paradoxes of alcoholism.³⁸

The difficulty in dealing with alcoholism is exacerbated by the fact that those who would intervene are in essence eliminating the one solution which the alcoholic has found in coping with life.

A third insight of importance is that alcohol exercises its seductive and sinister lure and soon there is the inexplicable phenomenon of addiction. Already in 1939, Silkworth wrote in his introductory letter to the book of Alcoholics Anonymous concerning the alcoholic these words,

All these, (alcoholics previously described) and many others have one symptom in common: they cannot start drinking without developing the phenomenon of craving. This phenomenon, as we have suggested, may be the manifestation of an allergy which differentiates these people, and sets them apart as a distinct entity.³⁹

John Keller observes, "Whatever the underlying causes, the immediate reason for the drinking is loss of control."⁴⁰ Rather than experiencing the freedom s/he formerly did, now the person finds himself/herself in bondage to a disease which makes human relationships nearly impossible. Keller conceptualizes the addictive bondage in existentialist language similar to that of Paul Tillich. "Their bondage is involvement, conscious or unconscious, in an effort to save

³⁸Blane, 46.

³⁹Alcoholics Anonymous (New York: Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, 1955) xxvii.

⁴⁰Keller, 103.

their own lives, to overcome their own estrangement."⁴¹

A fourth insight of importance is that the initial step in recovery is removal of the alcohol and its toxic effects from the system. This seemingly self-evident fact is not always known or practiced. Professionals have been plagued with feelings of frustration and futility in attempting to deal therapeutically with an addictive personality before the chemical and its concomitant effects were removed. Fox and Lyon,⁴² McCarthy and Douglass,⁴³ Roebuck and Kessler⁴⁴ and numerous others have dealt exhaustively with the chemical effects of alcohol in the human body. All aspects of the body are affected and prolonged inebriety results in both temporary as well as permanent brain damage referred to as organic brain syndrome. Before one can deal effectively with the person s/he must be detoxified. Once the chemical and its residual effects have left the body, recovery through transformation can continue as the alcoholic and family radically reverse their lifestyle, attitudes and disposition.

A final insight of importance is to realize that this is a process which requires time and patience for recovery to occur. This is a critical awareness for the alcoholic, the family, the significant social circle as well as the pastor and other professionals who may

⁴¹Keller, 22.

⁴²Ruth Fox and Peter Lyon (eds.), Alcoholism (New York: Random House, 1955) 16.

⁴³Raymond G. McCarthy and Edgar M. Douglas, Alcohol and Social Responsibility (New York: Crowell, 1949) 90.

⁴⁴Roebuck and Kessler, 62-63.

work with the system. The addictive cycle usually takes years to develop and with it the concomitant family patterns of coping. Even in those instances when change appears to be abrupt, time and patience is required for readjustment on the part of the system.

The proposed definitions and etiological theories contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of alcoholism. None is sufficient alone to give a full explanation, but when taken together the pastor has a much better understanding of the dynamics which s/he is working with and can therefore be more effective in facilitating the process of transformation.

CHAPTER II

TRANSFORMATION AND THE SOCIAL PERSPECTIVE APPROACH

A. IMPORTANCE OF THE SOCIAL MATRIX

It is a major contention of this paper that the disease of alcoholism does not develop autonomously or independently of the social matrix. If one is to speak meaningfully about the transformation process, the social matrix must be taken into consideration. Cognizance of this fact was taken seriously in the Surgeon General's Ad Hoc Committee on Planning for Mental Health Facilities already in 1961 which included the following recommendation, "A comprehensive treatment program of the alcoholic should include consideration of his family and his immediate social environment."¹ Howard Clinebell vividly portrays this dimension in an editorial article noting that dealing with the family often constitutes a larger opportunity for the professional than working with the alcoholic.² He likens the impact of alcoholism in the family to the rippling effect of a stone thrown into the water. The waves move outward and encompass first the family and then the immediate social environment. Since it is often the family or close associates who first seek help, it is imperative to look at the whole family system. As a family disease everyone in the family becomes ill and is affected as Philip Hansen states in his

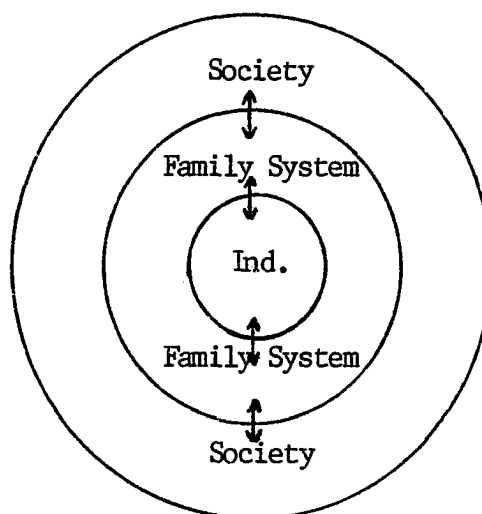
¹Eva Marie and Richard H. Blum, Alcoholism (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1967) 275.

²Howard J. Clinebell, Jr., "The Agony of the Family of the Alcoholic," Pastoral Psychology 13:123 (1962) 5-7, 65.

popular work.³

In most considerations of the disease, the focal point of attention is the alcoholic who becomes the 'identified patient.'⁴ Overlooked is the impact made by the larger social structure of culture in which the person and the family exist. The conceptual model which graphically portrays the phenomenon of the disease is illustrated in Fig. 1. The influence of the individual impacts the family and society, but society conversely also impacts the family and the individual so that in the corporate milieu there is reciprocity and interaction. The social interactionism of George Herbert Mead is an effective paradigm for explicating the interpenetration of the self and society.⁵

Fig. 1



The mutual interaction of the individual, family and society in the development of alcoholism.

³Philip L. Hansen, Alcoholism (Lake Mills, IA: Graphic, 1974)

⁴Virginia Satir, Conjoint Family Therapy (Palo Alto: Science and Behavior, 1967) 1.

⁵George Herbert Mead, Mind, Self and Society (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1940)

Social attitudes towards alcohol depict it as a beverage of conviviality and acceptance which functions as a lubricant for social interaction. It is present on many important occasions. It is used for celebrative toasts honoring visiting dignitaries, the closure and consummation of business transactions as well as the social occasions such as marriages, funerals, family gatherings and parties. The social implication is that alcohol is important for festive occasions as well as everyday encounters. This social expectation encourages its frequent use.

It is a ritualistic rite of passage into the adult world for many young people. Legislative action has specified varying ages as the point at which an individual may legally consume beverage alcohol. It is an ironical and peculiar phenomenon that one of the social symbols and designated marks of maturity in our society is to become inebriated to the point of utter immaturity and irresponsibility in one's words and actions.

The effects of alcohol as portrayed on stage has become a major source of comic relief for people. Social attitudes are insidiously and almost imperceptibly ingrained in the minds of young and old alike as the alcoholic becomes the brunt of ridicule, amusement, scorn and laughter. The social messages are ambivalent and create a perilous paradox. The alcoholic is both a source of delight and disgust. Drinking functions both to enliven and escape. Social attitudes both dignify and disparage the use of alcohol. There are promises and prohibitions, pleasure and pain associated with the usage of alcohol in relationship to social attitudes.

Religious attitudes and practices likewise present the same ambivalent posture as the rest of society. Alcohol can be sacramentally utilized for celebration of the most sacred moment in worship or it can be unilaterally condemned as an agent of Satan. Howard Clinebell⁶ has written a fascinating article investigating the philosophical and religious factors in the etiology and treatment of alcoholism. Both ends of the spectrum are represented in the religious community. This underscores the sense of conflict and ambivalence.

Cultural dispositions are likewise diverse in their treatment of alcohol and the alcoholic. Pioneer work has been done by Joan Ablon in what she terms 'cultural patterning' for the alcoholic family. She states,

To understand alcohol usage in this population, a knowledge of the historical and cultural roles of drinking in the relevant ethnic or national groups and holistic view of contemporary family life are essential. It is suggested that massive social controls in major areas of family life are closely related to problematic drinking behavior. The delineation of cultural prescriptions regarding behaviors and attitudes directly and indirectly related to drinking patterns may contribute a significant cultural dimension to proposed models of the 'alcoholic family' system.⁷

Her study is admittedly limited because it was restricted to middle class Roman Catholic families, primarily of Irish, German and Italian descent. Yet, it is an exciting area with perhaps the greatest potential for understanding the disease from a wider systemic perspective as is being suggested in this paper. She concludes her

⁶Howard J. Clinebell, Jr., "Philosophical-Religious Factors in the Etiology and Treatment of Alcoholism," Quarterly Journal of Studies on Alcoholism 24 (1963) 473-488.

⁷Joan Ablon, "The Significance of Cultural Patterning for the 'Alcoholic Family'," Family Process 19:2 (1980) 127.

work with this statement,

This study of a specific group of families at high risk for frequent and severe alcohol problems illustrates the importance of looking at the behavior of family members as they relate to each other in a complex of social and cultural expectations rather than focusing only on individuals as interacting bundles of pathological needs."⁸

With reference to Fig. 1 again, it is suggested that the social interactionist view of the mutual impact of the individual on the environment and the environment on the individual provides the most workable framework not only for understanding the dynamics of the disease, but also for understanding the dynamics of recovery. All levels of interaction present a portrait of ambivalence and conflict, a collage of confusing conceptualizations and expectations. While an image of transformation as suggested for the individual and his/her family network in relationship to alcohol is an impossibility in relation to the total social and cultural arena, what is advocated are educational experimental endeavors which will heighten the sensitivity and knowledge of the general populace to the nature of alcohol and the disease of alcoholism. The purpose is to effect a gradual transformation of attitudes and to encourage and stimulate thought concerning the deep chasm between the conflicting dispositions which currently hold sway. From the social perspective, attention is turned to the family and the impact of alcoholism on this social structure.

B. IMPACT ON THE FAMILY

The family is the social unit in which most individuals grow and develop and from whom they gain their images and attitudes about life.

⁸Ablon, 142-143.

The family receives the ambivalent messages of society concerning alcohol and the alcoholic. Family members are also experiencing their own reactions to the presence of the alcoholic in the family. They may love the alcoholic as a person, but hate his/her lifestyle which is dominated by the alcohol. In this love-hate relationship, the family may be a barrier or a facilitator for the alcoholic in the recovery process.

1. Family Systems Approach

The family of origin is often the place where the dynamics of addiction were established. Ray Woodruff in his study concludes that most alcoholics come from unstable family backgrounds with either weak or nonexistent role models to emulate.⁹ McCord and McCord note in their longitudinal study of the alcoholics which they researched this conclusion,

From this analysis, a consistent, statistically significant pattern emerges: the typical alcoholic, as a child, underwent a variety of experiences that heightened inner stress, intensified his desire for love, and produced a distorted self-image.¹⁰

A significantly unique approach to the systemic nature of the disease from a family perspective has been developed by Wolin, Bennett, Noonan and Teitelbaum in a provocative article entitled, "Disrupted Family Rituals: A Factor in the Intergenerational Transmission of Alcoholism." They define a family ritual as "...a symbolic form of

⁹Roy C. Woodruff, Alcoholism and Christian Experience (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1968) 76.

¹⁰William and Joan McCord, Origins of Alcoholism (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 1960) viii.

communication which, owing to the satisfaction that family members experience through its repetition, is acted out in a systematic fashion over time."¹¹ They postulate that these rituals stabilize the family by delineating overtly or covertly expected roles and rules for the family. Even though they admit that their study was very limited in dealing with only twenty-five families, they nevertheless found in these families that significant alterations in family rituals were noted and the change in family ritual, "...supports the hypothesis that the greater the change in family rituals during the time of heaviest parental drinking, the more likely the recurrence of alcoholism in the children's generation."¹² They conclude their study with this summary,

Whatever approach is adopted, we propose that it focus on the family system and its response to the drinking problem rather than the behavior of the alcoholic parent in artificial isolation from the family. As our research has demonstrated, children from families which have not maintained their rituals during a period in which there is a severe parental drinking problem are at greater risk of developing alcohol problems than are children from families which maintain their rituals.¹³

There are, however, many alcoholics who have lost their families through their drinking. The effects of the disease continue to manifest themselves in the family whether they are living with or apart from the alcoholic. The adage 'out of sight, out of mind' is not applicable with this disease because the patterns of action and

¹¹Steven J. Wolin et al., "Disrupted Family Rituals: A Factor in the Intergenerational Transmission of Alcoholism," Journal of Studies on Alcoholism 41:3 (1980) 201.

¹²Wolin, 210.

¹³Wolin, 213.

reaction have been established in the system and continue to be operative even years after the alcoholic has left the scene.

Out of the crucible of culture come the ingredients which are determinative of the disposition of the family while simultaneously the family is experiencing its own reactions to the practicing alcoholic. These two powerful forces are amalgamated at the family level producing a mutation called an alcoholic family.

One of the major barriers to recovery among family members is the conspiracy of silence and the collusion of covering up. Family members are aware of the problem, but judiciously avoid the subject (the alcoholic) and the subject matter (alcoholism). As someone once stated it, the family adjusts to the situation, readjusts and finally maladjusts. Plans and activities orient around the drinking. The whole family becomes drawn into the whirlpool to be drawn under in its powerful force. Clinebell states graphically the dynamics of what occurs in the family of the alcoholic.

Alcoholism crushes the interpersonal strands of family life like a hobnail boot on a delicate spider web. It is here in the intricate interdependencies of the family that the awful agonies of alcoholism are most devastatingly real.¹⁴

He goes on to explain that the qualities required for a functional family are destroyed by the alcoholism. Wolin et al state emphatically the importance of the family system approach to the disease.

Our research has evolved from the family-systems approach to alcoholism. According to this perspective, alcohol misuse becomes so intertwined with the functioning of the family that the pathology cannot be isolated from family interaction and behavior.¹⁵

¹⁴Clinebell, "Agony of the Family," 5.

¹⁵Wolin, 200.

Alcoholism is a contagious disease as it devastates the family members as progressively and systematically as it does the one who is drinking. Vern Johnson notes in relationship to the family that,

As their failures mount in number, their feelings of inadequacy grow, making them still more vulnerable to projections. They too become emotionally distressed, often as severely as the chemically dependent person himself. This means that every sick alcoholic is surrounded by other sick nonalcoholics.¹⁶

The social interactionist view of the disease is given credence by Johnson in his analysis and appraisal of the dynamics of the family illness.

The people around the alcoholic person have predictable experiences that are psychologically damaging. As they meet failure after failure, their feelings of frustration, fear, shame, inadequacy, guilt, resentment, self-pity, and anger mount, and so do their defenses. They too use rationalization as a defense against these feelings because they are threatened with a growing sense of self-worthlessness.¹⁷

The net result is that family members assume the same characteristics and attitudes as the alcoholic. Without realizing what is happening, they too become defensive and exhibit the same kind of impaired judgment as their alcoholic counterparts.

Thus the disease becomes an all for one and one for all kind of situation. Members of the family need to understand their complicity in the progression and perpetuation of the disease. They also need to be alerted to the reality that their lives too are in need of transformation. An enlightened spouse once said, "I have come to see that we are all in this together. Not only you, but I too need to change." Shipp's assessment is most accurate at this juncture,

¹⁶Vernon Johnson, I'll Quit Tomorrow (New York: Harper & Row, 1973) 29.

¹⁷Johnson, 30.

The family of the alcoholic must do more than just sit on the side line, they are in the game and what is expected from them is understanding, compassion and wholehearted cooperation. Without these, the chances of the alcoholic having a long period of sobriety is not likely, even though the patient might have the advantage of the best skills available, the deepest devotions and the best techniques which can be found.¹⁸

It has been observed in the parish ministry as well as in the clinical setting that if one member of the family begins to recover, it often has a salutary effect upon other members of the family. It takes at least one person, but preferably all members of the nuclear family, with courage, determination and a measure of insight to break the destructive games and patterns.

Yvelin Gardner substantiates this conclusion by noting that changes in the family's attitude can precipitate change in the alcoholic. A deviation from the usual pattern of reaction can prompt the alcoholic to seek information about this change and thus hasten the process of surrender and subsequent recovery.¹⁹ The changed attitude, or from the perspective of this dissertation, the transformation of the family lifestyle is an incredibly difficult process. Attitudes, actions and reactions have developed over a long period of time, usually years. Interrupting, reversing and reorienting the social system in the family or with significant others requires time and patience on the part of the pastor who works with the alcoholic and his/her family.

¹⁸Thomas J. Shipp, Helping the Alcoholic and His Family (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966) 130.

¹⁹Yvelin Gardner, "The Pastor's Use of Community Resources in Helping the Alcoholic," Pastoral Psychology 13:123 (1962) 41.

In the most recent study of the family system, Peter Steinglass has contributed an important dimension. He says,

One notable oversight in previously suggested conceptual models has been a failure to incorporate a developmental perspective. Although the chronic nature of alcoholism as a clinical condition has obviously been acknowledged, the long-range developmental implications for the family of having to live side by side with such a condition has rarely, if ever, been addressed. Some attention has been paid to the notation that families go through an identifiable sequence of stages in their adjustments to alcoholism and keen interest has been expressed in the role the family plays in the maintenance of chronic drinking patterns, but these models have tended to focus almost exclusively on family life during periods of active drinking.²⁰

Steinglass substantiates the hypothesis suggested in this paper that it is not enough to deal only with the dynamics of the disease during the active drinking phase, but to look at the issue from a longitudinal systems perspective. The family is involved in the genesis and continuation of the disease, the recovery process, as well as the transformation process which continues in the subsequent months and years of sobriety. Steinglass offers much in aiding the persons working with recovering families to move beyond the existential dynamics of the disease and immediate recovery to look at long range models of families who are in the recovery process.

2. Children in the Family System

Developmentally, attention is directed to the children of alcoholics who are in their formative years of growth and maturation. The characteristic experiences of children in an alcoholic home

²⁰Peter Steinglass, "A Life History Model of the Alcoholic Family," Family Process 19:3 (1980) 211-226.

intensify their sense of frustration and insecurity. When the alcoholic is sober, the children may experience lavish affection and attention. When inebriated, parental behavior becomes unpredictable and capricious. The child does not know what to expect next. Subjected to repeated experiences of this nature, the child soon feels a loss of self worth and stability.²¹

This uncertain atmosphere is often accompanied by violence. It has been noted that,

As the father senses his loss of masculinity he may substitute sadistic brutality for it, turning against one or several members of the family. The child, in his helplessness, will develop fear, hatred and revenge 'fantasies' for which he later on feels guilt and fear of retaliation.²²

This kind of tenuous and threatening environment has a profound effect on the developing child or children. The negative experiences and feelings of insecurity, fear and uncertainty spawn deep feelings of conflict within the child. The possibility of perpetuating the cycle of the disease increases dramatically in the children of alcoholics.

3. The Spouse of the Alcoholic

The final relationship to consider before directing attention specifically to the alcoholic himself/herself is that of the spouse. Jacqueline Wiseman in a recent study dealing with the problems encountered by the wife of the alcoholic indicates that in the past there was an assumption that the wife was the causal agent. It was

²¹Ronald S. Catanzaro (ed.) Alcoholism (Springfield: Thomas, 1968) 110-11.

²²Catanzaro, 111.

assumed that she had a pathological personality characterized by dominance, dependency or sadomasochism. Recent research has dramatically challenged this assumption. She states,

More recently, Steinglass and others (i.e., Steinglass, 1976); Steinglass, Weiner and Mendelson (1971), Steinglass and Meyer (1977) and Paredes (1973) have taken a functionalist, systems approach and attempted to show that the wife is a part of the family 'system' that may help maintain the husband's problem drinking. Where the focus has been on the coping behavior of wives of alcoholics, investigators have been concerned with her management of the problem over a considerable time span of his drinking career and do not detail early attempts to get him to stop or cut down.²³

Wiseman sees the emphasis in working with the spouse from a different perspective. Now the, "Practical focus here is on family therapy to make wives of alcoholics aware of the system which has been created and to enable them to handle their behavior in such a way as not to perpetuate it."²⁴

It is noteworthy at this juncture before continuing the investigation to observe that nearly all of the literature concerns itself with the 'wife' of the alcoholic with little if any attention devoted to the study of the 'husband' of the alcoholic. This sexual bias stems from a previously held assumption that the incidence of alcoholism among males was at least four times that of females. However, in recent years, professionals are becoming increasingly aware of the high incidence of alcoholism among females. Greater visibility is occasioned by entrance into the job market. As the stigma of social

²³Jacqueline P. Wiseman, "The 'Home Treatment': The First Steps in Trying to Cope with an Alcoholic Husband," Family Relations 29:4 (1980) 541-542.

²⁴Wiseman, 547.

censure is lifted, more and more females are seeking treatment. Fruitful research could be launched in the area of studying the husbands of female alcoholics and comparing the dynamics operative when the situation is reversed.

Clinebell²⁵ and Keller²⁶ give pragmatic direction with regard to working with the wife of the alcoholic. Wiseman indicates that most wives deal with it in direct ways using logical persuasion, presenting a case, nagging or emotional pleadings. Others may use the indirect approach of pretending to act normal, taking over responsibility, increasing activities in situations where the husband might be prone to drink (referred to as 'industrial therapy'), drinking with him or other indirect strategies such as withholding sex or being punitive when he is drinking.²⁷

All such strategies ultimately fail and the spouse develops many of the same traits and dispositions as her husband. Joan Jackson makes this observation,

She shows some combination of defensiveness, hypersensitivity to criticism, helplessness, anger, depression, martyrdom, self-pity, guilt, shame, anxiety, and hatred of herself and others. In brief, her feelings are those of a person who feels trapped in an unstable situation from which she can see no escape.²⁸

In the Big Book, the chapter devoted to the 'wives' says,

²⁵Howard J. Clinebell, Jr., "Pastoral Care of the Alcoholic's Family Before Sobriety," Pastoral Psychology 13:123 (1962) 27-28.

²⁶John Keller, Ministering to the Alcoholic (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1966) 132-137.

²⁷Wiseman, 541-549.

²⁸Joan K. Jackson, "Alcoholism as a Family Crisis," Pastoral Psychology 13:123 (1962) 9.

"We wives found that, like everybody else, we were afflicted with pride, self-pity, vanity and all the things which go to make up the self-centered person and we were not above selfishness or dishonesty. As our husbands began to apply spiritual principles in their lives, we began to see the desirability of doing so too."²⁹

As has been previously suggested, alcoholism is a family disease and the move towards health on the part of one person, whether the one drinking or not, precipitates changes in the entire family system. Often it is the spouse of the alcoholic who makes the initial changes, but the reverse has been equally known to be true.

Current literature now refutes the idea that the spouse of the alcoholic has a pathological need to have his/her spouse drink. Keller quoting the findings of Whalen says, "Actually the percentage who have a pathological need to be married to a drinking alcoholic may be no higher than twenty per cent."³⁰ The primary issue is not one of pathology, but of lifestyle reversal if health is to be achieved in the family system. Vern Johnson frames the situation in this manner,

There is the startling realization that the mate of the wet drunk is a dry drunk, - a sort of mirror image of the alcoholic. The nonalcoholic or even abstemious spouse will show almost all the symptoms of the disease except the physical deterioration caused by ethel alcohol itself.³¹

The parallel process prevails as the spouse too forfeits peace of mind and happiness ensnared in the web of futility and despair in his/her own life.

²⁹Alcoholics Anonymous (New York: Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, 1955) 116.

³⁰Keller, 140.

³¹Johnson, 85.

The disease dynamics as they come to expression in the spouse of the alcoholic may be subsumed under the four "r"s in this presentation of the disease concept.

First there is the 'reaching' on the part of the spouse for any kind of solution to this urgent problem. Jackson notes,

Lacking cultural guidelines to follow in order to resolve the illness, the family resorts to trial and error. The wife tries everything she can imagine to control her husband and he does all in his power to resist being controlled. She screams, nags, withdraws into silence, tries to understand, babies him, takes all responsibility for handling the money out of his hands, tries to drink with him, refuses righteously to take a drink, buys his liquor to keep the peace, pours it down the drain, is very affectionate, locks her bedroom door against him, keeps the children away from him, encourages the children to engage in joint activities with their father, etc. and etc.³²

The spouse reciprocates and mirrors the same behavior and the revolving door of alcoholism is set in perpetual motion. The spouse tries 'reaching' for anything which may promise some relief, but finds no adequate antidote for the situation. S/he may reach outside of the marriage in desperation to find understanding and escape, but that usually compounds the problem and exacerbates the already gnawing guilt which inevitably accompanies the disease.

Secondly, the spouse may begin to assume 'responsibility' not only for the mate and the family, but for the drinking itself. As the drinking increases so does the guilt and shame in the spouse. In an effort to cope with these feelings, the spouse assumes responsibility for making the situation look better. When this fails, the spouse loses self-respect and withdraws and isolates from society convinced

³²Jackson, 13.

that s/he is not worthy of social contact. "Thus the alcoholic's disease infects the spouse with a disease as crippling as his own."³³ Assuming responsibility for the mate's drinking and behavior is one of the dynamics which first comes to the attention of the pastor. Adrift on the sea of confusion, the spouse seems to find a mooring in assuming a disproportionate amount of responsibility. In most cases, this sense of responsibility and blame is one point at which the active alcoholic will agree, it is the spouse's fault and if s/he would only change, things would be better. The game being played, in TA terms is, "If It Weren't For You!" Repeated exposure and involvement in this game issues in it becoming a permanent pattern in the marital relationship with its own payoffs for each person. The non-alcoholic spouse has found a logical answer to the question 'why' the mate drinks and the mate has presented an airtight alibi for not abstaining. A transformation of the whole system is called for in order that all persons in the system begin to accept responsibility for their own feelings and actions.

Closely associated with the idea of 'responsibility' is the third 'r' of reaction and that is 'role' confusion. Verdery in addressing this issue reflects a stereotypic sexist stance in his assumptions about sexual roles, but it seems that the issue goes beyond that important concern to a much deeper relational issue in the family system. Verdery states,

If one is to understand how family relationships participate in the causation and continuation of the drinking pattern, one must

³³Greg Martin, Spiritus Contra Spiritum (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1977) 58.

reexamine the role each person plays in the home. Often the usual male and female role is confused, even sometimes reversed, in homes where alcoholism is evident. The wife of the alcoholic may be related to the husband more as a mother than as a mate, and she may be much more dominating and over-protective than his mother or father.³⁴

Wives and husbands who have alcoholic mates often assume dual roles in terms of parental responsibility in relationship to the children in the family. This dual role as a parent is seen in relationship to the one drinking as well. Comments such as, "He is such a little boy," "She acts like a little kid" or "I have three children in my family, my two daughters and my husband." are frequently heard. In many families these roles persist because they feed mutual needs of those involved to 'take care of' and 'be taken care of.'

The fourth 'r' is that of resentment. In the efforts of reaching, taking responsibility and reversing roles there looms forth and emerges a deep resentment towards the alcoholic, the family, the world, toward God and ultimately toward the self. The Big Book speaks of resentment in relationship to the alcoholic stating, "Never forget that resentment is a deadly hazard to an alcoholic."³⁵ The same is true of the spouse. Sometimes the spouse will marry the alcoholic with the fallacious assumption that s/he can change him/her. When that effort fails, the spouse will harbor a deep resentment for the alcoholic because s/he represents his/her failure at effecting a change. That resentment is easily transferred to others in the family

³⁴E.A. Verdery, "The Clergy and Alcoholism," in Ruth Fox (ed.) Alcoholism (New York: Springer, 1967) 279.

³⁵Alcoholics Anonymous, 117.

system and affects his/her total disposition towards life.

Resentment is indicative of a smoldering anger against the situation in which the individual finds himself/herself. "Why did this have to happen to me?" "Why did I have to be stuck with a drunk?" These and similar questions plague the spouse. Articulation of these negative feelings results in a sense of guilt and the person is caught in a double bind. The very nature of the situation serves to fan the flames of resentment until s/he feels that s/he may be consumed by it. If the anger and resentment are not acknowledged, they usually manifest themselves in depression, listlessness and a lack of interest in life.

The dynamics of the disease are operative on both a conscious and unconscious level. Coupled with that fact, from the interactionist perspective, are the overt and covert messages being received from other members of the family and friends as well as from society at large. The longer the person harbors the resentments, the more irritations and difficulties are magnified. The person is drawn into the depths by the rip tides of emotion and confusion. Alcoholism has done its damage and has taken its toll on the spouse as well.

C. SUMMARY

In summary, it must be forcefully argued that one cannot consider the disease of alcoholism apart from the social and cultural matrix in which it develops. A transformation of attitudes toward alcohol and the alcoholic and his/her family is imperative. Likewise, a transformation of the family structure and all of the persons within that system becomes a necessity if the family chooses to live together

with a sense of serenity. The most fruitful work currently being done in the field of alcoholism is in the area of systems transformation. This also holds the greatest promise for significant impact in the future as new methodologies are developed for transforming the family and social systems.

CHAPTER III

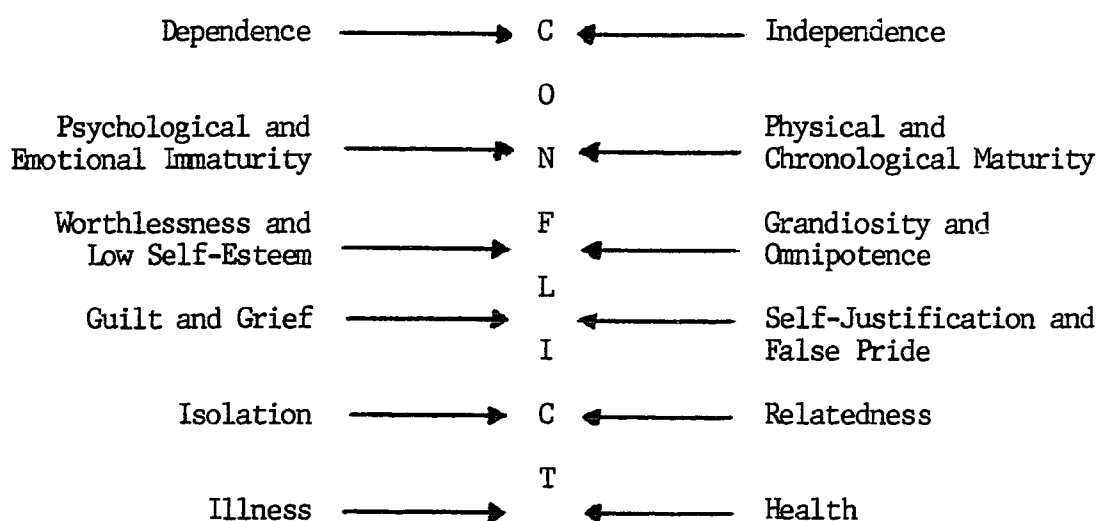
TRANSFORMATION AND THE DYNAMICS OF THE DISEASE IN THE INDIVIDUAL

The last chapter affirmed the social character of alcoholism as a disease which develops within the matrix of the social and cultural setting. Its effects are felt in society, but most specifically in the family system. In this chapter the dynamics of the disease will be considered as it comes to expression in the afflicted alcoholic himself/herself. By carefully delineating the dynamics of the disease in the individual, a sharper impression can be gained as to the manner in which the alcoholic impacts the family and wider social system.

The alcoholic is a person who suffers from a basic lifestyle disorder which is characterized by conflict and ambivalence. This dis-ease with life clamors for resolution. The process of transformation specifically addresses that issue of conflict and the person's self perception and relationship to God and other human beings is substantively changed. An understanding and appreciation of the alcoholic's perception of reality is helpful in facilitating and interpreting the transformation process to him/her and members of the family.

The following diagram is an attempt to conceptualize the conflict in portraying a set of seemingly irresolvable paradoxes which the alcoholic senses as s/he evaluates his/her life.

Fig. 2



A visual portrayal of the alcoholic's perception
of reality.

Transformation in the individual with its concomitant result, sobriety with serenity, comes only as these conflicts are satisfactorily dealt with both by the individual and his/her social network. Total resolution and a permanent solution of the conflict is not humanly possible, but a satisfactory resolution which enables the person himself/herself to live without the anesthetizing effects of alcohol is a possibility.

An understanding of the dynamics of conflict is imperative for the pastor who seeks to provide pastoral care for the alcoholic and his/her family as well as functioning in a role as facilitator in the transformation process.

The Big Book underscores the reality of this conflict and its consequent results stating,

More than most people, the alcoholic leads a double life. He is very much the actor. To the outside world he presents his stage character. This is the one he likes his fellows to see. He wants to enjoy a certain reputation, but knows in his heart he doesn't deserve it.¹

The mask which the alcoholic wears or the 'persona' in Jungian terms, is aeons removed from his/her perception of what is really transpiring internally. Lester Bellwood has successfully used Jungian categories to illuminate this situation.²

In keeping with the social interactionist perspective, the patterns of personality development as articulated by Karen Horney are the most helpful. She notes the significance of conflict as the basis for anxiety within individuals, particularly as these are evaluated in relationship to the 'idealized self,' 'the actual self' and the 'real self' in her schema. She states from her own clinical observation that, "Patients had good reason to shy away from these conflicts: they dreaded their power to tear them to pieces."³ Her understanding of neurosis is based in the seemingly irresolvable conflicts as perceived by the individual. Her vivid description of the neurotic personality fits perfectly into the clinical picture of the alcoholic viewed from the approach of this dissertation. She writes,

Because of his fear of being split apart on the one hand and the necessity to function as a unity on the other, the neurotic makes desperate attempts at solution. While he can succeed this way in

¹Alcoholics Anonymous (New York: Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, 1955) 73.

²Lester R. Bellwood, Alcoholism (Denver: Bell-Hart, 1973)

³Karen Horney, Our Inner Conflicts (New York: Norton, 1945)

creating a kind of artificial equilibrium, new conflicts are constantly generated and further remedies are continually required to blot them out. Every step in this struggle for unity makes the neurotic more hostile, more helpless, more fearful, more alienated from himself and others, with the result that the difficulties responsible for the conflicts become more acute and their real resolution less and less attainable. He finally becomes hopeless and may try to find a kind of restitution in sadistic pursuits, which in turn have the effect of increasing his hopelessness and creating new conflicts.⁴

Substituting the word 'alcohol' for 'sadistic pursuits' would describe accurately the profile of the alcoholic. An investigation of these conflicting dynamics is now considered, not in any sequential order of importance, but as they have been manifested at varying times and places in the experience of the alcoholic.

A. DEPENDENCE VS. INDEPENDENCE

The dependence-independence struggle in life is one in which the whole human family participates as human beings seek to relate meaningfully to one another while at the same time retaining a sense of autonomy. This seeming paradox finds its most satisfactory solution in interdependence which affirms the necessity of both dependence and independence without fixating on one to the exclusion of the other. The alcoholic vacillates between the two extremes and seemingly cannot find the resolution of interdependence.

Howard Blane notes that it is impossible to isolate one central organizing factor in terms of the personality of the alcoholic, but adds,

However, one observer after another has implicated conflict over

⁴Horney, 18.

dependency wishes in one form or another. Details of formulations vary and language differs, but dependency and inner struggles with it form the background of much of what has been said about the alcoholic.⁵

The alcoholic is engaged in a parallel process physiologically and psychologically.

As he grows more dependent on alcohol, he grows more dependent on others; it was just this deep need to 'be taken care of' that led him, at first, to the comforts and hazards of drink! But alcohol he never blames for his troubles. He tends to defend himself by blaming and disliking the people on whom he has grown more and more dependent.⁶

To state it another way, "Dependence on other people and dependence on alcohol are psychologically of the same order."⁷ There is set up as Stewart notes a vicious circle which exacerbates the problem.

If I am dependent on you and I get drunk at the wrong time I am even more dependent on you than ever. No amount of rude awakenings will change the alcoholic, however, until he gets the proper insight. Once the pattern of dependency is set, say in childhood or youth, it takes a long time for the alcoholic, no matter how intelligent he is, to see himself for what he is, a deeply dependent person.⁸

Dependence upon others in turn breeds resentment and hostility. The struggle for and affirmation of independence is frustrated by the awareness of the person's dependent state. As a result the paradoxical feelings drive a wedge into the life of the alcoholic as well as the entire family system.

Anger is at the bottom of the hostility and resentment. The

⁵Howard T. Blane, The Personality of the Alcoholic (New York: Harper & Row, 1968) 33.

⁶David A. Stewart, Thirst for Freedom (Toronto: Musson, 1960) 296.

⁷Stewart, 296.

⁸Stewart, 82.

experience and expression of anger carries with it a double-edged result thus implicating the alcoholic further in the maelstrom of his/her disease. Blane pictures it in this way,

The demandingly angry alcoholic alienates others and provokes anger. It is almost as if he wishes to be rejected. Why he does this when his major goal in life is to be cared for and loved is a paradox worth further examination. He fears the intensity of dependency, seeing in its gratification a devastatingly frightening relinquishment of self. This fear is especially seen among counter-dependent and dependent-independent alcoholics. At more conscious levels, the alcoholic feels unloved and emotionally expendable. The bottle is truly more a constant companion than people. Encouraging others to cast him out becomes a way of reinforcing his image of himself, the image that helps him to justify his drinking to himself.⁹

The hostility and anger in the alcoholic is evoked not only in himself/herself, but in the family or social network as well. The spouse of one alcoholic put it this way, "There is nothing I can do to please him! He wants me to take care of him and he doesn't want me to. He wants me to treat him like a baby, but resents it when I do. How can I win?"

Moving outward to the larger social system, there is developed what Dr. Vernelle Fox refers to as a 'hostile dependent relationship' with other segments of society.¹⁰ In reference to the medical profession, the alcoholic comes into the emergency room for treatment as a result of his/her alcoholism. The wound or the damaged organ of the body is treated and the medical personnel feel they have accomplished their task. A few days later s/he returns with another

⁹Blane, 42.

¹⁰Vernelle Fox, "Social Aspects of Alcoholism," Lecture given at Pomona Valley Community Hospital, Pomona, CA, 23 January, 1980.

problem and the medical personnel resent the fact that the person did not take care of himself/herself. The alcoholic being treated resents the medical staff as well for their attitude, but neither realizes that it is alcoholism which is the problem. Once the cycle is set in motion, the 'hostile dependent relationship' as Dr. Fox characterizes it continues uninterrupted. The same phenomenon is evident socially in relationship to law enforcement. This fact again substantiates the necessity for considering all levels of involvement and the manner in which the individual, family and total social network of culture and society exhibit the dependent-independent paradox of the alcoholic.

The downward spiral of the alcoholic continues as his/her anger at the world, the family and himself/herself inevitably produces a depression when the anger is not dealt with realistically and honestly. The same is true for family and others with whom the alcoholic comes into contact. The dynamics can be articulated very clearly.

Depression has been conceived as anger turned inward. Further, in situations where someone else is clearly at fault, the depressed person does not become angry at the other person, but takes all blame upon himself. Unable to express anger toward another, he turns it against himself, transforming it into depression. Basically, the depressed person is an angry person.¹¹

The anger of the alcoholic and at the alcoholic results from the dependence vs. independence conflict. The conflict is often apparent only when the person is drinking and experiencing the releasing quality of the alcohol which takes away his/her inhibitions. Blane paints a very accurate and vivid picture of the alcoholic who has overdependency

¹¹Blane, 39.

needs. When s/he is sober,

He may be obsequious, compliant, deferential, or may allow himself to be completely dominated by another person. His resentment over assuming a dependent status is only inferentially apparent, except when he is drinking. The pent-up hostility may burst forth in recriminations, biting sarcasm, or sulkiness. When he sobers up, he is contrite and seeks forgiveness.¹²

Blane further explicates the understanding of dependence by refining the categories of dependency in a tripartite manner. There are what he terms dependent, counter-dependent and betwixt-between dependent alcoholics.¹³

This categorization is strikingly similar to the conceptualization of the neurotic personality as developed by Karen Horney. Because of the 'basic anxiety' which develops when dependent needs are not met, the individual develops a strategy for dealing with interpersonal relationships. S/he either moves towards, against or away from people.¹⁴ S/he is aware of the feelings occasioned by the conflict and may move dependently towards people as Blane describes the dependent alcoholic or s/he may move against people counter-dependently. Blane notes that the third category is vacillating between the two positions which often issues in isolation or moving away from people in Horney's terms because the person is so torn by the nature of the conflict.

Alcohol becomes the curative agent for the 'basic anxiety' to overcome the deep sense of conflict. Freytag articulates the situation

¹²Blane, 97.

¹³Blane, 16-17, 20.

¹⁴Horney, 18.

accurately,

Anxiety ensued as the result of an internal conflict between strong dependency needs and an equally strong desire for independence. The dependency strivings in the alcoholic are suppressed and repressed and the individual is forced into a type of behavior that constitutes a complete denial of dependency.¹⁵

Independence is sought after and coveted by the alcoholic, but is as elusive as the mythical unicorn. S/he seeks to capture it and affirm it, but it escapes him/her and the spiral of frustration increases its whirling frenzy prompting the person to seek relief which the alcohol promises.

The solution for most people to the dependence-independence problem as noted earlier is interdependence, but this is not a possibility for the alcoholic. Blane explains,

But to expect even a very rough approximation of ideal positive relationships among alcoholics would be highly unrealistic. As we have repeatedly seen, the alcoholic's preoccupation and conflict about dependency needs preclude his meeting a basic condition for forming positive attachments to others. Added to this are difficulties in trusting others, in respecting himself, in giving up immediate goals for the sake of greater but less immediate satisfaction, in expressing anger, and finally, in facing conflictual feelings openly.¹⁶

The alcoholic experiences the wrenching phenomenon of being pulled in two directions and the subsequent sensation of his/her own person being torn apart. The situation in and of itself is exasperating and increases the need for close personal attachments simply for survival, yet the close attachment is interpreted as a smothering experience and

¹⁵Fredericka Freytag, "Psychodynamisms with Special Reference to the Alcoholic," in Ruth Fox (ed.) Alcoholism (New York: Springer, 1967) 45.

¹⁶Blane, 94.

so the alcoholic simultaneously loves it, hates it, succumbs to it and resists it. It is a no win situation!

Not finding the right combination interpersonally with people or transpersonally in a relationship with God, the alcoholic ends up in an idolatrous relationship. E.A. Verdery sees the alcoholic as worshipping the person s/he is dependent upon, but that in due time the alcoholic must defy what s/he has deified. This results in estrangement and hostility for both parties involved.¹⁷

The paradox of dependence-independence is so overwhelming that a healthy dependence upon God and a healthy interdependence upon people is not a viable option. The alcoholic becomes consumed with his/her own anger and depression is the result. A transformation of the whole person as well as the family or social network is necessary to deal with this situation. Because of the theological dimension of the dependence-independence situation, the pastor has an important function to serve in helping to articulate this concern and aid in moving the whole family towards transformation. The dependency-independency issue is inevitable, "The crucial factor is the way in which the alcoholic solves the conflict over dependent wishes."¹⁸

B. IMMATURITY VS. MATURITY

The second area of conflict and tension grows out of the first.

¹⁷E.A. Verdery, "Pastoral Care of the Alcoholic's Family After Sobriety," Pastoral Psychology 13:123 (1962) 35-36.

¹⁸Blane, 15.

The dependent relationship of the alcoholic precludes psychological development and emotional maturity. S/he remains more or less at an infantile or early childhood level demanding instant gratification for his/her insatiable needs. This behavior is not tolerated by other adults and results inevitably in conflict with others and unrelenting frustration in the alcoholic.

Fred B. Ford says,

Everyone of us has a life-long battle between dependence and independence. Growing up, facing toward life, beckons us; something native within us, I think, tries to push us toward maturity but the reality involved in maturing is also formidable and threatening.¹⁹

Thus closely attendant upon the dependent-independent paradox is the mystifying reality of emotional and psychological immaturity while being consciously aware of physical and chronological maturation. Clinically in my counseling the alcoholic has often said, "I am a little boy in a grown man's body." This is one of the devastating realities of life which the alcoholic seems to be at least vaguely aware of while drinking, the incongruity of where s/he is emotionally in relationship to the physical maturation process. There is a desire to be 'adult' in transactional analysis terms, but the alcohol addition precludes this kind of emotional and rational maturity and instead there is insecurity and fear.

In the development of the neurotic personality, Karen Horney refers to the fact that the need for security is a universal need. It can become a neurotic need so that the person's total energy is

¹⁹Fred B. Ford, The Alcoholic (TS) (Newton Centre, MA: Andover Newton Department of Psychology, n.d.) 37.

consummed by the quest for permanent security. Emotional immaturity manifests itself most graphically in neurotic insecurity and fear. Stewart sees the personality as one of total conflict and tension. The alcoholic realizes the need to both give and receive love in order to sense security, but s/he is not capable of that kind of a mature love relationship.²⁰ Because of his/her disease, the alcoholic is one who either aggressively takes or passively receives with no thought of actively giving.

Horney's concept of a neurotic need for affection is characteristic of many alcoholics as their immaturity comes to expression in their life styles. Stewart sees this craving for attention as a lack of self-confidence. It is indicative of the uncertainty of oneself which is characteristic of the immature. "Its cure lies in the principle of personal growth, the deepening of self respect."²¹ It consists of accepting and valuing people and the world for what it is as opposed to what it can do for the person. The alcoholic has difficulty in doing that and in giving because s/he has little to give or offer. The immature emotional state is demanding and not giving, therefore egoistic and narcissistic. Ford says in this connection,

Again, I could not prove it but in my own mind I am sure that the awareness of not being loved wholesomely, if at all, is the cause of the narcissistic wound which is at the bottom of the alcoholic's sickness, the healing of which is his healing.²²

²⁰Stewart, 83.

²¹Stewart, 102.

²²Ford, 54.

Emotional immaturity as a lifestyle has secondary gains for the alcoholic. Strecker says in this connection,

Generally speaking, we may say that alcohol is utilized as an escape from the responsibility and burden of mature emotional life and its decisions. The impulse, then, is regressional. It is an abandonment of emotional maturity. Even the highest degrees of knowledge and maturity fail to withstand the leveling influence of alcohol.²³

This pattern of behavior is deeply ingrained and likely can be traced back to the family of origin. This substantiates the contention that it is impossible to isolate the disease of alcoholism and fixate on the individual who suffers from it, but rather that the disease has its genesis in the social matrix of family and society.

In the introduction to his work, Strecker states that alcoholism needs to be prevented at its source. The emotional immaturity can often be traced to improper training and environment in early childhood.²⁴ He says of the alcoholic,

He cannot of will not face life, usually because a pattern of emotional immaturity has been laid down in childhood. He is unwilling to partake in the great adventure of living, with its joys and sorrows, its disappointments and its compensations. He finds in alcohol a source of unreality and dangerous make-believe. This is the most dangerous form of psychic allergy. Unfortunately, he does not see, sometimes until it is too late, that in the long run he is more hurt by alcohol than he could possibly have been hurt by life and its experiences. He begins by using alcohol as a crutch to help himself over the rough places, but soon the crutch is more important than the help it gives.²⁵

The clinical observation of counselors and the common complaint of

²³Edward A. Strecker and Francis T. Chambers, Alcohol (New York: Macmillan, 1938) 12.

²⁴Strecker and Chambers, xv.

²⁵Strecker and Chambers, 38.

significant other people in the social scope of the alcoholic is that s/he acts like a little child. Not having matured, the person reverts to childish ways of behavior to get his/her own way. One sees a physically and chronologically mature adult reacting very much like that of a child.

Children react with rage, temper tantrums, or sullen withdrawal when their wishes are not satisfied on the spot. Part of growing up is learning how to delay gratification and to find substitute means of satisfying wishes that if acted upon directly would result in inappropriate behavior. Building up tolerance for frustration is, in Freud's terms, suffering pain for the sake of later pleasure.²⁶

This observation is confirmed by Clinebell²⁷ in his research that low frustration tolerance is a characteristic of most alcoholics. It seems to be a result of the emotionally immature and insecure position of the alcoholic as s/he perceives himself/herself in relationship to the rest of the world.

The technical sobriquet of this phenomenon is low frustration tolerance. When the alcoholic is denied a wish, request, desire, or demand, he comes inwardly enraged; outwardly, he may be deferential, withdrawing, insistent, or angry. But inwardly he is furious. Most of us can put things off for a bit, sometimes even under conditions of extreme frustration, but to the alcoholic, delay and tolerance are anathema.²⁸

Immaturity leads to a low frustration tolerance which in turn results in impulsiveness. The alcoholic finds it imperative to act on impulse immediately or s/he will sense an intense sense of anxiety. More specifically,

For alcoholics, the wish that demands satiation is the impulse to

²⁶Blane, 71.

²⁷Howard J. Clinebell, Jr., Understanding and Counseling the Alcoholic (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1968) 54.

²⁸Blane, 65.

drink. As we shall see, however, his need to act impulsively is not confined solely to the consumption of liquor, but is a generalized personality trait that permeates much of the alcoholic's behavior.²⁹

The social consequences of emotional immaturity results in severe problems in interaction with other people. This too, can be traced often times to the family of origin. Perry et al. in their research comment,

Alcohol dependency can be considered, in part, a social phenomenon, stemming at least partially from undeveloped or inadequately developed social interaction skills during childhood. The adult may discover that alcohol serves to facilitate interpersonal relationships and thus uses alcohol to compensate for this early social learning deficit.³⁰

Among the youth, alcohol serves the function of covering up for perceived ineptness socially and/or sexually. Youth want to be 'mature' and 'adult,' yet are not, but find that alcohol serves a two-fold purpose. It is a cultural symbol of maturity and it also provides the liquid courage for meeting otherwise anxiety producing social situations. The proverbial wallflower becomes the life of the party, hence considered by his/her peers as being fun, aggressive, mature and truly adult. One alcoholic stated it in this way. "I was so uncertain of myself, but the booze gave me the confidence to act like an adult and it worked! So, it was natural for me to use it again and again because it was a solution for me to the terrible problem of being shy and unaccepted among my peers."

²⁹Blane, 62.

³⁰Sally L. Perry, et al., The Rehabilitation of the Alcoholic Dependent (Lexington, MA: Heath, 1970) 66-67.

One of the seeds in the 'soil of addiction' as Howard Clinebell refers to it is that of immature emotional responses from a chronologically and physically mature body. Clinebell says,

"The individual's emotional or interpersonal development is stunted on a level incommensurate with his chronological age. He continues to respond in childish fashion long after he has left the age when such was appropriate.³¹

Strecker comments,

Therefore, to permit the emotional force on an infantile level less painful egress at the higher levels, the narcotic effects of alcohol are resorted to, and one gets a picture of the incentive that causes the psychically maladjusted person to make his painful response to reality less painful by this method....The fact that alcohol works, and for a time works too well, is responsible for the beginning of a habit formation.³²

The grown-up liquid courage in time reverses is alleged gift of maturity and reduces the individual to the lowest level of emotional immaturity. Yet, it was an effort on the part of that individual to achieve just the opposite.

The alcoholic has the twin sensations on some level of awareness that there is the strong desire to be mature, but the awareness that s/he is immature. The alcohol aids in anethetizing these feelings of conflict. To state it in the terminology of Karen Horney, there is an unfathomable chasm established between the idealized self and the real self which keeps the person in constant conflict. In order to overcome this seemingly irresolvable paradox in the perception of that person, a transformation and concomitant radical reversal in self perception and lifestyle needs to occur.

³¹Clinebell, 54.

³²Strecker and Chambers, 79.

C. LOW-SELF ESTEEM VS. GRANDIOSITY

A sense of worthlessness and low self-esteem are constant companions of the alcoholic, particularly during intervals of sobriety, unless s/he falls into the category of one who is sociopathic. Paradoxically, there is also at the same time a sense of omnipotence and grandiosity which becomes manifest when the person is drinking to compensate for the sense of worthlessness and low self-esteem. These diametrically opposed dynamics are often exaggerated in the same person and that individual may fluctuate rapidly between the feeling of despair one moment and euphoria the next. These incompatible attitudes seem mutually exclusive, yet are evident with all of the force and power which each carries feeding and fanning the fires of conflict which burn like an inferno within the person.

Blane articulates the paradox well stating,

The esteem in which the alcoholic holds himself reflects both his fantasies of omnipotence and his feelings of worthlessness. His self-regard is alternately or simultaneously extremely high or low.³³

The alcoholic once again perceives this as an irresolvable paradox which issues in a sense of utter frustration and futility.

The feelings associated with worthlessness and low self-esteem are trademarks of the alcoholic often after s/he has sobered up following a drinking binge. Comments such as, "I'm no good, I'm bad through and through." or "I'm not worth saving, I'm just an old soak.",

³³Blane, 78.

are common reactions. A sense of utter despair and hopelessness engulfs the alcoholic because often times s/he has made an effort to stop and extricate himself/herself from the disease, but each renewed effort meets with failure which then compounds the problem. Reality becomes too threatening and painful to face and the circular nature of the disease is set in motion as the person drinks again to avoid the grim prospect of facing himself/herself. Stewart says,

The alcoholic can't stand reality; he flees to the world of fantasy where he can be what he wants to be, on his own terms.

Insecure, anxious, fearful and tense in the real world, the alcoholic seeks defense and protection in drink. He inflates himself in grandiose talk to ward off the ugliness of reality. But something else happens in that tavern conversation if one happens to hear it in other phases. The talk shifts from the aggressive abuse of others to abuse of oneself.³⁴

Acknowledging what the self has become is more than the person can bear, but the vicious cycle is perpetuated by the reaction formation of establishing unattainable ideals and goals in grandiose form to compensate for the awareness of his/her situation. The goals and ideals are impossible thus insuring continued feelings of frustration and failure. Blane states,

It is a rare person who is willing or able to admit to himself that he feels impotent and inferior. To avoid such painful admissions, the alcoholic represses or denies feelings of inadequacy, along with needs to be dependent, and adopts in their place a counter-attitude of superiority and worthiness. This goes hand in glove with already strong dispositions toward primitive omnipotence. And in the background is the desire to return to an infantile state of passive freedom and reciprocity, seen as the means of escape from frustrations and anxieties of responsible adulthood, and a return to lost warmth and security.³⁵

³⁴Stewart, 85.

³⁵Blane, 81.

Because of the pervasive feelings of low self-esteem and worthlessness, the perfectionistic ideal which is established insures failure which in turn substantiates the worthless feeling which the alcoholic has about himself/herself. Dr. John O. Grimmatt in his work, "Barriers Against Recovery" calls this the perfectionistic-failure bind or the Superman Urge. It is a pervasive attitude which naggingly persists even after the person is in the process of recovery. He states,

Goal setting is too high and unrealistic and almost always insures that they will fail, thus adding to their already deep sense of inadequacy. They cannot allow themselves to make a mistake or be human. They must know everything and have the right answer for any occasion....He has no leeway for error, thus creating the constant state of tension and fear which is quite evident in many alcoholics. The person is caught in a vicious circle: Because of his failure he gets caught in setting additional unrealistic unobtainable goals and fails again.³⁶

Horney's conceptual model of the 'idealized image' explicates the situation of the alcoholic very well. Functionally the idealized image: 1) substitutes for realistic self-confidence and realistic pride, 2) makes it necessary to constantly measure and compare oneself with others, 3) creates a self-idol which is the only basis for purpose in life, 4) demands a pattern of rigidity in relationship to reality and 5) represents a kind of artistic creation in which opposites appear reconciled in the individual.³⁷

Under pretense, the neurotic attempts to bridge the gap between the 'idealized image' which stems from the 'idealized self' and the

³⁶John O. Grimmatt, Barriers Against Recovery (Center City, MN: Hazelden Foundation, n.d.) 5.

³⁷Horney, 100-104.

'real self.' All attempts yield more frustration which serves to embed the neurosis that much deeper. "Externalization' becomes the attempt to deal with the conflict and remove the issue from the internal situation to the external arena. This projection is designed to alleviate the suffering which ensues from the disparity between the idealized image and the real self. These conflicts lead inevitably to greater fears and the impoverishment of the personality because the individual does not and cannot deal with the situation and either projects and denies or becomes paralyzed and immobilized eliminating any possibility for movement or growth.

When the neurotic finds or uses alcohol to deal with the situation, it becomes the solution for his/her sense of frustration. Those times when the alcoholic is not drinking, the feelings of frustration become more acute. If alcohol is not immediately available to deal with the disparity, the problem is projected on to those close at hand. Incapable of realistically facing his/her own faults, s/he looks for faults in others. Thus the alcoholic, "...is always seeking a scapegoat on whom he can pour abuse and criticism to relieve the guilt and insecurity of his own troubled conscience."³⁸

When the alcoholic is not scapegoating in the social system s/he is suffering the sting of the inability to live up to the grandiose image established. Pursuit of the idealized image is a desperate attempt to establish worth in the eyes of that individual and in the eyes of significant social figures. This is translated

³⁸Stewart, 88.

intrapsychically in Horney's scheme of the self becoming slavishly submissive to the 'tyranny of the should,' becoming coercively driven, demanding self perfection and with the aid of alcohol experiencing delusions of grandeur.

Keller explains it in this fashion,

The egocentric, omnipotent, defiant, hostile self continued into adulthood as the controlling force and resulted in a situation in which the individual unconsciously wanted to be and tried to be someone he was not, someone that nobody is: namely, the superior, perfect One, God. He knew no peace within himself and was disillusioned by the lack of perfection in others.³⁹

Clinebell adds this note to the matter of grandiosity which is especially

...evident in the defiant, self-inflating behavior during active alcoholism, when the alcoholic seems to 'organize the universe around the perpendicular pronoun' as one of them put it. Harry Tiebout (now deceased), a psychiatrist who studied this attribute, referred to the 'king complex.'⁴⁰

Grandiosity is in essence a defense mechanism as Clinebell notes against the alcoholic's own feelings of low self-esteem.⁴¹ The alcoholic finds that there is magic in a bottle which brings him/her close to that feeling of perfection. The alcohol distorts reality, obliterates the pain and gives the illusion that the contrasting feelings have been taken care of and his/her fantasies have become reality. An important facet of this whole process is that the alcoholic now has an identity, at least in his/her own mind. Keller remarks that with alcohol,

³⁹John Keller, Ministering to the Alcoholic (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1966) 11.

⁴⁰Clinebell, 54.

⁴¹Clinebell, 55.

He felt superior and omnipotent. This was living! Now he was somebody - identity. Being just another imperfect human being was intolerable because it didn't satisfy his need for perfection and omnipotence and was loaded with feelings of rejection. Alcohol worked wonders and it worked quickly. What it did 'for' him he never forgot. He had the answer. Alcohol never let him down. Under the influence of alcohol the anxiety of estrangement in relationship to God, which he may or may not have been consciously aware of, was gone, as was the anxiety of estrangement from himself and others. In the unreal world of anesthesia, he had a perception of himself that enabled him to accept himself, feel accepted by others, and feel quite adequate to face the realities of life.⁴²

Now s/he is somebody and has the illusion of being worthwhile rather than worthless. The effects of alcohol gave the individual that identity and sense of importance sought after for so long. Because the alcoholic's early relationships were characterized by authoritarianism or overprotectiveness, s/he never felt loved and accepted. Maximal efforts were directed to achieving perfection to gain acceptance while concurrently recognizing and deeply sensing the reality of imperfection. Wishful thinking and brutal reality place the alcoholic in an impossible double bind for which s/he seeks a satisfactory solution.

The problem is that it is unreasonable, impossible and absurd, but the alcohol has so affected the one afflicted that the improbable appears probable and the impossible possible. Once the effect of the alcohol has worn off, the person is back to the feelings of worthlessness and low self-esteem with one notable difference, s/he is lower than the previous occasion and thus must drink and re-engage in the whole process once more as a matter of survival. Often times the feelings of worthlessness and low self-esteem when sober are covered up

⁴²Keller, 11-12.

by lying, rationalizing and defensive denial to preserve some semblance of coherence and identity. This is understandable as it provides the excuse to drink once again since his/her system has broken down.

Strecker says that the alcoholic has an "...exaggerated tendency to self-deception and a technique of rationalizing trivial emotional upsets into more or less plausible reasons for alcoholic relapses."⁴³

In keeping with the position of this paper, it is the paradox of conflict between these two extremes which plagues the alcoholic and perpetuates the drinking cycle. Stewart notes that, "To be grandiose means not only to inflate oneself, but also to deflate oneself and to look for punishment, if necessary, in order to be the centre of attention."⁴⁴ This is likewise in keeping with Karen Horney's understanding of the neurotic personality as it comes to expression in the 'pride system.' Grandiosity often is the cover for low self-esteem, but presenting an image of self-effacement can be the opposite side of the same coin. Self-effacement places the individual in such a position as to command the pity and attention of others and thereby reaffirming in a negative way that s/he is the center of the universe.

Keller suggested that an important aspect of understanding the alcoholic's behavior is that s/he is desperately searching for an identity. The fact that an identity is found in grandiosity and omnipotence or conversely in an image of himself/herself as being

⁴³Strecker and Chambers, 84-85.

⁴⁴Stewart, 86-87.

worthless and unworthy of any self-esteem conjures up a fascinating consideration in relationship to the understanding of human development.

Erik Erikson in his epigenetic developmental schema speaks in terms of the crisis of adolescence as that of identity versus role confusion.⁴⁵ It seems that this developmental schema may illumine the situation for the alcoholic who is desperately searching for an identity in the midst of the conflict.

F. Freytag in quoting the findings of McCord and McCord notes this conclusion which they postulated based on their longitudinal study.

...McCord and McCord concluded that a 'role confusion' occurred and that this constituted the major psychodynamic pathology found in alcoholism....It is this inadequate perception of his role that interferes with his self-identification and results in a confused body image.⁴⁶

This fact may serve as a clue for important research in the future. To what extent is this the issue for those who began their addictive drinking in the teen-age years? The search for identity, characteristic of teenagers in Erikson's scheme, remains an unresolved crisis. The consumption of alcohol and its concomitant effects arrests the emotional development at this stage and the alcoholic fixates at the level of psychological immaturity in adolescence. This postulate is in keeping with the paradoxical conflict of the individual having an adult body physically and chronologically, while remaining at a level of psychological immaturity. Role confusion, identity, body image and social adjustment remain at this level and are not allowed to progress

⁴⁵Erik Erikson, Childhood and Society (New York: Norton, 1963) 261-263

⁴⁶Freytag, 45.

because the effects of the alcohol keep the individual arrested at this point.

This leaves the person with a great sense of confusion not only in relationship to himself/herself, but to others as well. His/her inappropriate behavior in relationship to the family and/or significant social circle prompts this question as Stewart notes,

What, he will ask, is wrong with me that I do such things to them I love most? The answer, though it would shock him perhaps to know, is that he commits these acts to gain attention either through pity, love or punishment. He comes to expect even punishment in efforts to get attention. He will suffer pain, strange as it seems, to bolster his distorted personality. There is a fusion here of the desire to hurt and the desire to be hurt in the unconscious wish to aggrandize himself. In his moods of self-pity, in the hang-over or well in his cups, he will reveal the other side of the grandiose quality; he will turn his aggression against himself. But whether directed inward or outward, it is an immature quality of the alcoholic vainly asserting his identity.⁴⁷

Stewart has pointed out the interrelationship and the interaction of the paradoxes which the alcoholic suffers with his/her disease. His work serves to point out the complexity of the dynamics which are operative.

The seemingly irresolvable paradox of the alcoholic who experiences the awareness of worthlessness and low self-esteem while at the same time affirming grandiosity and omnipotence needs to be satisfactorily resolved by a radical reversal in lifestyle and a transformation of the person. In the scheme of recovery dealt with in this dissertation, this requires a surrender of the self and its idealized and distorted image for a healthier and more realistic image.

⁴⁷Stewart, 86.

D. GUILT AND GRIEF VS. SELF-JUSTIFICATION AND FALSE PRIDE

Guilt is another constant companion of the alcoholic which in parasitic fashion eats away mercilessly at its host. One perceptive alcoholic expressed it in this way, "Guilt just became a way of life for me." The alcoholic is aware in many instances that s/he has been irresponsible and hurtful in neglecting the family. There is the realization that they likely have cheated employers by being intoxicated on the job or at least delinquent in their responsibilities. Being dismissed from employment because of chronic drinking compounds the sense of guilt in not being able to provide, but also equally as important, is the embarrassment and shame which accompanies such an experience. There is often guilt surrounding the drinking episodes. Both people and property can be injured and damaged during the drinking debacle, frequently during memory blackouts these incidents occur and the person has a sense of bewilderment when the incident is later reported to him/her.

In addition to the heavy burden of real guilt is that of neurotic guilt. S/he may feel guilty about not living up to the expectations of parents, spouse or society as a whole. There is the guilt associated with the inability to live up to the perfectionistic/grandiose ego ideal noted earlier as well as a kind of paranoid guilt for the general disarray of the whole world.

Guilt becomes an ingrained part of the alcoholic's very being. Stewart says, "This sensitive, persecuted attitude was made worse after each fresh session of remorse, after succeeding hang-overs, until you became guilty about most of your actions whether associated with

drinking or not."⁴⁸ There is guilt surrounding broken relationships, financial ruin, unkept promises, abhorrent behavior all of which is reinforced by the social stigma associated with alcoholism wherein the victim is treated like a pariah.

Vern Johnson sees in the acute sense of guilt a positive dimension to its presence, he writes,

In truth, the pain, however difficult to bear, was the proof of his sanity. People with his history should feel guilt! He recognized that he was still strongly committed to the values at the center of his identity. He had not lost his idealism.

Further, he was able to recognize that when his behavior was contrary to his values, it brought him pain.⁴⁹

Dr. Vernelle Fox has pointed out that there is a tremendous amount of grief which accompanies the guilt. There is the grieving which accompanies loss of relationships as well as material loss of money and property. Perry et al state,

In most cases emotional loss is represented by deprivation of loved ones by death, divorce, separation, illness, etc. However, loss of love objects may occur through rejection by or preoccupation of (withdrawal) the love object, even when the love object is physically present. Moreover, love objects lost need not necessarily be human; a lost job, business, or profession may have the same depressing effect.⁵⁰

The alcoholic's situation becomes insidiously compounded when grief is added to the guilt s/he already feels for loss of loved ones and/or love objects. All human beings sustain loss and to some extent feel guilt and certainly grief in the process, but the alcoholic both

⁴⁸Stewart, 84.

⁴⁹Vernon Johnson, I'll Quit Tomorrow (New York: Harper & Row, 1973) 77.

⁵⁰Perry, 46.

expands and distorts his/her sense of guilt and grief in relationship to life. The resultant depression is expected and the antidote self-prescribed is alcohol. Blane explains that this depression comes to a heightened expression around the holiday seasons as the alcoholic reflects about his/her loss with the concomitant feelings of remorse which exacerbates the sense of misery.⁵¹

The immediate reaction to this kind of a miserable existence is the reason why the alcoholic does not do something about the guilt and the grief. Stewart zeroes in on the dynamic which is involved when he says,

Actually he is afraid to think of life without alcohol. The prospect terrifies him. He defies outside help - or ignores it. He refuses to go the whole way and learn that the alcoholic can recover - with outside help.⁵²

Dr. Vernelle Fox insightfully has seen that there is grief associated with giving up the alcohol which has been the closest friend for many alcoholics over the years. The consumption of alcohol and the consequent actions of the alcoholic cause guilt and there is a sense of grief about the people and things lost through drinking, yet to give up the alcohol, long time companion and friend represents grief and loss of the greatest magnitude.

In vicious fashion then, when confronted by this paradox and conflict, the alcoholic returns to the alcohol. The alcohol with its properties chemically does in fact preserve the alcoholic from the pain, but simultaneously destroys him/her physically, emotionally and

⁵¹Blane, 40.

⁵²Stewart, 93.

spiritually.

The part of him/her which is exposed to the world must almost of necessity counteract the pain of guilt and grief and this is done by false pride and self-justification. Stewart notes,

False pride, among other things, is short-sighted and fearful. When the will-power gag wears thin and ceases to register, the alcoholic may turn about face and, in desperation, use the helpless addict alibi. Either way, he is a victim of the little dictator (inside him) and he wallows in wishful thinking.⁵³

Ultimately for the alcoholic at this point in his/her life, the illusion is that s/he can still do it alone. It is this prideful posture which feeds the growing cancer of addiction.

Besides the futility of leaning on external supports, the alcoholic also learns that his will-power which he thought to be a safeguard against heavy drinking, was the very cause of his alcoholism! This force he calls his will-power turns out to be better named false-pride. This tyrant, this false pride, is a tool of the little dictator, the cause of all the alcoholic's trouble, of his tension of mind and body, and of his defiant struggles with society.⁵⁴

In summary Stewart says, "The three tendencies of false pride, to be defensive, to seek attention and to be self-sufficient to the point of arrogance, all three are short-sighted. They don't go far enough and they don't go deep enough."⁵⁵

The false pride and self-justification posture serves an important function for the alcoholic, namely the illusory attempt at preserving some semblance of integrity as a person. But, there is only an illusion of integrity brought about by the delusion of false pride.

⁵³Stewart, 93.

⁵⁴Stewart, 92.

⁵⁵Stewart, 94.

The extent of the delusion is noted,

...many abnormal drinkers think that nobody realizes the abnormality of their condition. It is a misguided effort of the ego to retain some shreds of false pride.⁵⁶

Self-justification is the corollary of false pride. Even though the actions of the alcoholic cannot be justified, s/he will find justification for them. This is the alibi game and the rationalizing process which justifies every action no matter how bizarre. Drinking is occasioned by everyone and everything 'out there!' It may be a nagging wife, impossible children, a heartless supervisor, bad weather, a hypocritical church to which s/he belongs and a multiplicity of other rationalizations. The inner being of the alcoholic is aware of the disparity. The vicious circle is once again set in motion with its merry-go-round effect. There is the awareness of the incongruity between what is and what should be. Normally this is a healthy awareness, but for the alcoholic who suffers the 'tyranny of the should' to use Horney's phrase again, the 'idealized self' is an impossibility.

The alcoholic is not really content and cannot be content with himself/herself because false pride and self-justification mercilessly drives the person to be 'better' than anyone else in order to compensate for the feelings of guilt and grief. Thus the appetite of the overstimulated ego ideal becomes insatiable which only exacerbates the fear which the alcoholic self is experiencing. There is a deep-seated need to be different, to be set apart from others. To

⁵⁶Strecker and Chambers, 152.

discover that one is truly human and shares in the frailty of humanity is untenable. It is only in so doing, however, that the alcoholic can once again, as Keller states, join the human race.⁵⁷

Because of the disparity between what is and what should be, the alcoholic resorts to false pride and self-justification. When that system fails, the only alternative is to turn to the anesthetizing effects of liquor, the liquid cure-all. The alcohol serves to shore up and legitimize the claims of the Big Ego.

In the parlance of Alcoholics Anonymous, the false pride and self-justification associated with the 'Big Ego' must be smashed. This is not the healthy ego of self confidence and self-affirmation as a person, but the arrogant and egoistic attitude which sees oneself at the center of the universe. It is a breaking of the 'idealized image' in order that the real self may have an opportunity to be exposed and to grow. In the process, the guilt and the grief are likewise dealt with realistically. The purpose of the drinking was to inflate the ego, but the result in the alcoholic is to deflate the person.

False pride and self-justification become the antidotes for the venomous feelings of guilt and grief which strike the alcoholic at every turn. In an effort to avoid the strike of one, s/he inevitably falls victim to a host of striking vipers and cannot extricate himself/herself from this poisonous pit. It requires not greater effort and/or willpower, but assistance from outside of oneself to deliver the alcoholic from this pit.

⁵⁷Keller, 67.

It is the thesis and focal point of attention from this perspective of recovery from alcoholism that a transformation process is mandatory which involves a surrender of the conflict to a Higher Power or God rather than an attempt at overcoming the conflict through self-mastery.

E. ISOLATION VS. RELATEDNESS

Another of the seemingly insoluble paradoxes of alcoholic existence is the awareness of isolation with the disease, yet the deep seated need to be related to other members of the human race. Alcoholism exacerbates the sense of isolation in individuals as Blane speaks extensively of in his research. He uses the paradox of gregariousness and seclusiveness in his description.⁵⁸ The alcoholic hoped that alcohol would be the key which would unlock the door to interpersonal involvement and again, for a time, it worked. Released from his/her inhibitions, the person appeared and felt more convivial and congenial and certainly more comfortable in the presence of others. Once the drinking became addictive, it had the opposite effect, it served only to increase the sense of isolation. Alcohol is the master chemical of deception, it gives what the individual wants and then mercilessly takes it away. The person desired relatedness and for a time received it, only to have it snatched away leaving him/her upset and confused.

Voldeng writes,

⁵⁸Blane, 95ff.

The alcoholic patient is a lonely patient. He believes that all of his friends and even his own family have forsaken him (which may be close to the truth). His only friend for a long time has been the bottle, and even this tends to run dry.⁵⁹

The stories related in the Big Book portray this reoccurring theme of isolation and loneliness, a sensation that no one cares and the resultant plunge into the depths of despairing self-pity, hemmed in by the walls of helplessness and hopelessness, and an awareness of being consigned to the depths of degradation and darkness. This intense sense of isolation and loneliness is a dynamic which accounts for the high rate of suicide among alcoholics. The need to be related is so intense and the sense of isolation so excruciating that self-destruction becomes the chosen avenue of dealing with it.

One of the most common features of an alcoholic is his deep feeling of loneliness. He becomes so lonely that he is paralyzed from appropriate action. This loneliness is apparent in such symptoms as depression, hopelessness, boredom and apathy. Although many alcoholics appear to have social skills and seem to be the 'life of the party,' closer examination usually reveals that their relationships to people are quite superficial. They have not learned how to express feeling or affection toward others, and the give and take in a human relationship is quite one-sided, mostly 'take.'⁶⁰

This dimension of the disease has been graphically illustrated by Dr. Vernelle Fox.⁶¹ She sees this paradox as being inherently given in the human condition. Human beings are born isolated into the

⁵⁹Karl E. Voldeng, Recovery From Alcoholism (Chicago: Regnery, 1962) 64.

⁶⁰Grimmett, 6.

⁶¹Vernelle Fox, "Difficulties Encountered in Maintaining a Therapeutic Community," in Ruth Fox (ed.) Alcoholism (New York: Springer, 1967) 165.

world and also born with a deep resistance to change. Yet, change is imperative if the person is to satisfy the growing awareness for relatedness which comes through the socialization process. This two-fold need, namely the need to change and the innate resistance to change causes anxiety and alcohol becomes the way of ameliorating this dilemma.

In Clinebell's research, he noted that the sense of loneliness was reported in a significant percentage of the alcoholics he interviewed. "Thirty-four of the interviewees (44 percent) reported feelings of isolation and loneliness, a majority tracing their feelings throughout their lives. A typical comment was, 'I can't feel warm toward people.'"⁶² As David Riesman has characterized it, the alcoholic would definitely be a part of the lonely crowd.⁶³

Fred Ford who characterizes the alcoholic as one who has turned away from life says,

Without much doubt they continued to live with and among people but that doesn't mean they didn't turn away. It may be the very fact I speak of has resulted in some in mixing with people with more energy, friendliness and jollity. This doesn't mean that they didn't turn away from real relations with people and it can leave them with that desperate sense of being alone, little human islands in a boundless sea where satisfactory communication has never been established, or has broken down.⁶⁴

The alcohol once again delivers a two-pronged attack on the individual. It is used to both cover up the sense of isolation and

⁶²Clinebell, 55.

⁶³David Riesman, The Lonely Crowd (New York: Doubleday, 1950)

⁶⁴Ford, 7.

loneliness as well as a social lubricant to overcome the sense of isolation. In the web of alcoholic life, imbibing the balm to cover the isolation only makes it worse, for the drinking acts as a deterrent to establishing meaningful relationships and is a causative factor in the deterioration of the relationships which do exist. Ford notes that alcohol threatens every relationship which the person has. He substantiates his claim by quoting Dr. Andras Angyal who attributes most psychogenic illness to isolation on the part of the person from others and from oneself. Thus the alcoholic is on the run at all times from reality.⁶⁵

Like every other human being with a need for relatedness, the alcoholic seeks out such opportunities in lounges and bars. There s/he expects to find relationships, others who will 'understand' and care. For the alcoholic who compulsively drinks and compulsively talks the gatherings at the bar are not sharing dialogues, but monotonous monologues. Many of the people there are attempting to use the situation for the same purpose and no one is really hearing, but only presenting a tragic soliloquy of self-pity.

Vern Johnson notes that this feeling of isolation and uniqueness is one of the first phenomenon observed in treatment.

When he arrives for treatment he thinks he is alone in his condition. His situation is unique. He has sensed himself as isolated, abandoned, or deserted; has felt apart, yet paradoxically has had a strong need to conceal the fact that he feels so separated from others. Now he learns that there are other people - and many of them - who are in the same boat. The very concept of his problem being a disease attacks his consuming sense of loneliness. By consciously attaching himself to his fellow sufferers, he starts his

⁶⁵Ford, 55-56.

resocialization process. He is beginning, as he puts it, 'to rejoin the human race.'⁶⁶

This insidious feeling infects those around the alcoholic as well. From the social interactionist perspective, society and significant people around the alcoholic isolate him/her, while s/he is involved also in this separation process. It must be kept in mind that this was not the original intention. The intention was to find relatedness and meaningful relationships which the alcohol initially delivered and then deprived the person of and drove him/her into greater isolation.

The family, because of embarrassment or shame, also begins to withdraw and isolate from normal social intercourse. The entire family's lifestyle becomes oriented around and determined by the drinking. The process is very gradual like an insidiously slow growing cancer. Before the social network is aware of it, it has succumbed to the malignant effects of the disease.

The circular pattern interactionally once again becomes complete between the individual, family and society. The alcoholic is aware of social reaction to his/her uncontrolled drinking. The awareness in and of itself is the occasion for continued drinking to soften the sense of rejection and shame. The net result is that the person soon develops an identity as a lonely alcoholic and works to maintain that identity. "Society for its part is only too ready to let him prove his point."⁶⁷

In imaging the alcoholic as a reservoir of conflict occasioned

⁶⁶Johnson, 63.

⁶⁷Blane, 131.

by paradoxical pulls, isolation and the desire for relatedness is seemingly for him/her an irresolvable paradox. This brings us to the crowning and final paradox in this conceptualization of the dynamics of the disease and recovery, namely the persistence in pathology versus the lure to recovery.

F. ILLNESS VS. HEALTH

To the casual observer of the alcoholic, it is mystifying that even when the opportunity is offered for recovery, the person seems reticent and resistant to doing anything about his/her drinking. This is part of the mystique of the disease often accompanied by the myth of willpower which is commonly held by the general public. Addiction renders the volitional dimension of the human being incapacitated in relationship to the consumption of alcohol. As Stewart notes,

You cannot fight your strongest desire through mere resolution. If you try, nothing but distress and pain result, and in the end, your strongest desire will assert itself in one way or another. You are free to act, but you must act to be free.⁶⁸

Thus the disease persists even though there may be a desire for health and recovery. My observation and conclusion in speaking with numerous alcoholics is that if they could stop the uncontrolled ingestion of alcohol they would. The old adage is appropriate for the alcoholic, "I would if I could, but I can't." The crux of the issue is the unwillingness to admit that reality. In the futile effort to control and the frustration which results from the inability to control is the circular pattern of addiction.

⁶⁸Stewart, 106.

Thomas Shipp in this connection makes an interesting distinction between a 'drunk' and an 'alcoholic.'

In simple terms the drunk desires and wants to drink but he can stop voluntarily when he wants to. The alcoholic is different, he does not desire or want to drink, but he does. I once read a statement, and I cannot find it nor do I know by whom it was made. As I recall, it is as follows, 'The drunk could stop if he would, and alcoholic would stop if he could.'⁶⁹

The most prominent dynamic associated with the tension of recovery and health versus pathology and illness is that of 'fear.' On the one hand is the fear of what will happen if something is not done and the process of recovery initiated. On the other hand is the equally compelling fear of what will happen if something is done for that too poses a threat.

Stewart expresses it most graphically in this manner,

The prospect of sobriety, though logically clear to him, is deeply resisted because the threat of life without alcohol is greater than the familiar fear of death from drinking. At least he knows now what drinking involves, with all its troubles. But sobriety is so foreign and frightening to him that he can conceive the most fanciful alibis to justify continued drinking.⁷⁰

The threat of change, even though for all intents and purposes for the better, is more than the alcoholic can tolerate. There is the fear and the grief of giving up the alcohol with all that the alcohol has done for him/her in the past. If the alcohol is taken away, what will be left to protect the person from reality? Strecker insightfully points out that,

⁶⁹Thomas J. Shipp, Helping the Alcoholic and His Family (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966) 67.

⁷⁰Stewart, 299.

No other agent (alcohol) or method so quickly and so effectively softens and camouflages and, finally, abolishes reality.⁷¹

Removal of alcohol for the alcoholic is removal of his/her very lifeblood! The dilemma is seen and the circular nature of the disease once again set in motion. There is bondage in addiction, but it has its own bizarre kind of freedom in the fantasy of irresponsibility, grandiosity and omnipotence. There is the lure of freedom from alcohol which is likewise compelling, but that is imaged as bondage to responsibility and sobriety. Fear is evident and inevitable no matter which of the two directions is chosen.

So it is the pattern of fear in each alcoholic that must be traced in any long term program of recovery. This pattern will be singularly his own in the fusion of events that make up his background and reaction to it.⁷²

Even once in treatment, the individual is not totally convinced that this is for his/her good and the ambivalence surrounding illness and health is a major conflict to satisfactorily resolve in recovery. Concerning the conflict Strecker says that, "...their resistances against getting well is in conflict with their desire to be cured; their suggestibility, and their potentialities of leading happy, non-alcoholic lives."⁷³ Only the addictive personality can truly understand and identify with the depth of this conflict and its wrenching implications.

The paradox of desiring to become well, but choosing to remain

⁷¹Strecker and Chambers, 41.

⁷²Stewart, 100.

⁷³Strecker and Chambers, 149.

ill, is experienced as an insoluble dilemma. The family also becomes enmeshed in that dynamic. The family adjusts, readjusts and then maladjusts to the disease as it comes to expression in the alcoholic and in themselves. They learn to live with it to the point that their maladjustment is considered as conventional behavior. Spouses and children may also experience secondary gains because of the illness in the family. Sobriety means change, adjustment and transformation for them as well and resistance is high. For society, the alcoholic has become the brunt of jokes, the scapegoat for social ills and problems. Sobriety means for society finding other avenues to corporately unleash anger, hostility, disgust and judgmentalism. Thus the social interaction surrounding the disease continues inexorably in a never ending cycle.

In the process, many alcoholics have a sense of 'giving up,' like going AWOL from life. They have turned away from life as Ford characterized them or perhaps another way of saying it is that they have run away from living. To stop running is not easy and is extremely painful.

Addiction is a process of illusory freedom and fun gradually growing into a pattern of pain and imprisonment. Sobriety, on the other hand, is an act of discipline and learning which leads to progressive improvement, day by day.⁷⁴

The road to sobriety is a narrow and difficult way which ultimately leads to life, but leaving the wide and easy path of alcoholism which ultimately leads to destruction remains a tantalizing option despite the end result.

⁷⁴Stewart, 272.

Using the wide and narrow path imagery, the road ahead presents a difficult choice. The wide road of alcoholism insures irresponsibility and pleasure as the person drinks himself/herself into oblivion. The narrow path of sobriety appears to be that of responsible behavior and the pain of self disclosure and self discovery. When a crisis of significant magnitude enters into the person's life, s/he stands at the crossroads of decision. Will it be health and life or sickness and death? The choice is not as clear-cut and simple as the nonaddictive person might think.

Someone stated accurately that the crossroads represents a multiple choice; there is insanity, incarceration, death or recovery. The effects of alcohol distort reality, blur the vision and impair the ability to make a rational choice. Fortunate are those individuals who make the choice of recovery and experience the results of transformation through surrender.

It cannot be emphasized too much that the conflict is a seemingly irresolvable paradox for the alcoholic between illness and health. As Strecker states,

Naturally, he dreads returning to sobriety because it means a renewal of the state of mind which he finds intolerable; consequently, he attempts to prolong a narcotically created mental condition to the point of oblivion. On awakening from a drugged sleep, reality plus the self-inflicted wound to his ego ideal, caused by his drunkenness, offers a still greater incentive for escape, and this vicious circle develops into the condition of chronic drunkenness that demands institutional care and treatment, before the patient has a chance of facing any phase or reality without alcohol.⁷⁵

The alcoholic dreads the return to sobriety and to society. The price

⁷⁵Strecker and Chambers, 93.

of health is to face and embrace both. The impossible is made possible by the phenomenon of transformation which occurs when the individual and his/her social network surrender the paradoxical conflicts which have held them hostage and find their strength and power in the spiritual resources of love and grace.

G. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

It has been affirmed that recovery through surrender and transformation is one viable option among others open to the person suffering from alcoholism. It is the approach which holds the most promise for people in pastoral care because its holistic posture takes seriously into account the physical, emotional as well as the spiritual dimensions of human personality.

In this chapter a detailed look at the seemingly irresolvable paradoxes which the alcoholic experiences were examined. It was noted how this personal disposition tremendously affects the family and the wider social system around the alcoholic. Satisfactory resolution of these paradoxical dynamics in the individual and in the family system can occur if the process of transformation is set in motion. If the pastor is to effectively and empathetically work with the alcoholic and family, s/he needs to understand the dynamics which are operative so as to facilitate rather than hinder the transformation process.

PART TWO

TRANSFORMATIONS AND THE EXPERIENCE OF CONVERSION IN ALCOHOLISM

CHAPTER IV

CONVERSION THERAPY - TIEBOUT'S PSYCHOTHERAPEUTIC PARADIGM

Thoreau's well-known description of the non-conformist as one who may not be out of step at all, but rather marching to the beat of a different drummer characterizes the work of Dr. Harry A. Tiebout. Tiebout was a psychiatrist whose theories and ideas in working with alcoholics ran counter to conventional psychotherapeutic practices. He received his inspiration from his work with alcoholics in Alcoholics Anonymous and termed the approach 'conversion therapy.'

The specific focus of this chapter will be an identification of the basic components in Tiebout's discoveries as he worked with A.A. His insights into the dynamics of recovery, particularly as related to the phenomenon of conversion, are integral to an understanding of transformation in this dissertation.

It is my conviction that the concept and theory of Tiebout is not only psychologically sound, but theologically valid. His approach lends itself well to understanding the alcoholic and his/her social network. It is a position from which a pastor can comfortably function as s/he works with the alcoholic and his/her family.

A. THE SPIRITUAL DIMENSION

Tiebout recognized the effectiveness and efficacy by which the group, Alcoholics Anonymous, dealt with the suffering alcoholic. The earth-shaking affirmation made by Tiebout is noted in this early

article where he writes,

While fully cognizant of the fellowship values of the group, of the help accruing to each member from his efforts to help new ones and of the general atmosphere of hope and encouragement which emanates from any successfully treated person, I regard them as accessory to the central therapeutic force religion - a truth which, hopefully, will become clear by the end of this paper, and a realization of which developed from many long talks with Mr. Wilson.¹

Tiebout's theories developed over an extended period of time as he clinically observed recovering alcoholics and as he engaged people such as Bill Wilson, co-founder of Alcoholics Anonymous, in conversation about the recovery process.

Tiebout's initial encounter with this approach was occasioned by his dealing with a chronic female alcoholic. Conventional psychiatric procedures proved futile as her character structure remained inveterate despite his best attempts to change it. A copy of Alcoholics Anonymous came into his possession and he passed it on to his patient. This became the 'turning point' for this person. Tiebout remarks concerning this case,

Even more surprising was the discovery that, with the process of assimilation of that program, her character structure, which had been blocking any help, dissolved and was replaced by one which enabled its possessor to remain dry.²

His scientific mind probed the causality which precipitated the change and he concluded that this person had had a religious or spiritual experience. The phenomenon could be observed by the outsider, experienced by the alcoholic, but not adequately explained by either. It was simply surmised that this was a spiritual matter.

¹Harry A. Tiebout, "Therapeutic Mechanisms of Alcoholics Anonymous," American Journal of Psychology 100 (1944) 468.

²Tiebout, "Therapeutic Mechanisms," 468.

transformation of the individual's character structure which remained inexplicable. Tiebout saw the following traits in the alcoholic,

Characteristic of the so-called typical alcoholic is a narcissistic egocentric core, dominated by feelings of omnipotence, intent on maintaining at all costs its inner integrity. While these characteristics are found in other maladjustments, they appear in relatively pure culture in alcoholic after alcoholic.³

Tiebout's predecessor, Dr. L.S. Sillman, distilled the characterological traits down to two which Tiebout adopted, namely 'defiant individuality' and 'grandiosity.'⁴ He goes on to state, "Inwardly the alcoholic brooks no control from man or God. He, the alcoholic, is and must be master of his destiny. He will fight to the end to preserve that position."⁵

Conventional religion was problematic for the alcoholic, for it meant acknowledging a Power greater than oneself which challenged his/her stance of self-deification. However, Tiebout discovered that when the alcoholic could acknowledge a Power greater than self, that step alone could free him/her from bondage, provided that s/he could do it without resentment.⁶

Tiebout saw this process at work in his client. Her aggression subsided, the sense of being out of synchronization with the world disappeared and the generally suspicious nature which characterized her disposition towards others virtually vanished.

³Tiebout, "Therapeutic Mechanisms," 469.

⁴Tiebout, "Therapeutic Mechanisms," 469.

⁵Tiebout, "Therapeutic Mechanisms," 469.

⁶Tiebout, "Therapeutic Mechanisms," 469.

In consultation with one of the co-founders of Alcoholics Anonymous, Bill Wilson, Tiebout discovered that the majority of alcoholics in the program had had an experience similar to that of his patient. The nature of the experience is two-fold in its manifestation. Either it is cataclysmic and sudden which occurs in about ten percent of the cases or it is a more developmental process which proceeds gradually as the individual grows within the context of the group experience in Alcoholics Anonymous.

The novelty of this avenue of recovery is that it is accomplished not by psychotherapeutic techniques or manipulation, but rather as a result of a spiritual experience. Based on his interview with Bill Wilson, Tiebout describes the phenomenon in this manner,

...a religious or spiritual awakening is the act of giving up one's reliance on one's omnipotence. The defiant individuality no longer defies but accepts help, guidance and control from the outside. And as the individual relinquishes his negative, aggressive feelings toward himself and toward life, he finds himself overwhelmed by strongly positive ones such as love, friendliness, peacefulness and pervading contentment, which state is the exact antithesis of the former restlessness and irritability.⁷

A case illustration from Tiebout's files was of a man who was admitted to the treatment center, allegedly doing well with recovery when he suddenly began drinking once again. Following the spree, the usual feelings of remorse, regret and guilt were evident. As the days of sobriety increased, the same feelings which precipitated the drinking initially returned. That night the patient described a religious experience which inexplicably turned his life around. He reported,

⁷Tiebout, "Therapeutic Mechanisms," 470.

I have a different feeling about God. I don't mind the idea of Some One up there running things now that I don't want to run them myself. In fact, I'm kind of glad that I can feel there is a Supreme Being who can keep things going right. I guess maybe this is something like that spiritual feeling which they talk about. Whatever it is, I hope it stays, because I never felt so peaceful in all my life.⁸

The notable dimension of this case and other cases which Tiebout worked with as well as numerous others in the field was that there was more to the recovery process than just the removal of the chemical substance from the body. There was a transformation of the individual who now experienced not only sobriety, but sobriety with serenity. Tiebout observed clinically that each person manifested a feeling and disposition of peace and security. This was linked with the 'spiritual awakening' as he described it and resulted in the person becoming more mature and able to meet life more positively and affirmatively without alcohol.⁹ The key factor according to Tiebout was the elimination of the narcissism or what one might call in theological terminology, self-deification. However, this is conceptualized, it is a primary ingredient in the recovery process.

Regardless of his final conception of that Power, unless the individual attains in the course of time a sense of the reality and the nearness of a Greater Power, his egocentric nature will reassert itself with undiminished intensity, and drinking will again enter into the picture. Second, most of the individuals who finally reach the necessary spiritual state do so merely by following the Alcoholics Anonymous program and without ever consciously experiencing any sudden access of spiritual feeling. Instead they grow slowly but surely into a state of mind which, after it has been present for a time, they may suddenly recognize is greatly different from the one they formerly had.¹⁰

⁸Tiebout, "Therapeutic Mechanisms," 471.

⁹Tiebout, "Therapeutic Mechanisms," 472.

¹⁰Tiebout, "Therapeutic Mechanisms," 472.

Tiebout believed that Alcoholics Anonymous had achieved this through their program which was devoid of sophisticated psychotherapeutic jargon and procedures. As a group they had adopted a simple plan of recovery. It is as this program is implemented that the concomitant results of sobriety with serenity becomes possible. As Tiebout concludes this article with respect to this unconventional approach through Alcoholics Anonymous he concludes that, "...religion plays upon the narcissism and neutralizes it to produce a feeling of synthesis."¹¹

People in the helping professions, including particularly the clergy of today, are so enamored with psychotherapeutic techniques that the resources of religion with its tradition and theology are often relegated to the ash-heap of irrelevancy and antequated remains of a primitive past. Tiebout unabashedly admits that psychiatry with its scientific, rational and logical approach may be missing something vital in the care of people by arbitrarily dismissing the role of religion in recovery. His words to his colleagues are appropriate for the clergy as well,

It is highly imperative for us as presumably open-minded scientists to view wisely and long the efforts of others in our field of work. We may be wearing bigger blinders than we know.¹²

Thus Tiebout emphasizes the critical and crucial role which religion plays in recovery. Without the spiritual dimension, recovery is a less likely possibility.

¹¹Tiebout, "Therapeutic Mechanisms," 473.

¹²Tiebout, "Therapeutic Mechanisms," 473.

B. TREATMENT OF THE SYMPTOM

The second revolutionary concept introduced by Tiebout was that it is imperative to treat the symptom which in the case of alcoholism is the drinking. It was the assumption on the part of most psychiatrists that the drinking was occasioned by underlying psychiatric disorders. Removal of the disorder would result in refraining from the alcohol. While it may be true in some instances that there are underlying psychiatric disorders, Tiebout saw that treatment of those disorders without removal of the chemical substance was an exercise in futility. He notes it in this manner,

The mistake we made was our failure to recognize that the task was twofold. In rather doctrinaire fashion, we persisted in treating the alcoholism as a symptom which would be cured or arrested if its causes could be favorably altered. The drinking was something to be put up with as best as one could while more fundamental matters were being studied. The result of this procedure was that very few alcoholics were helped. The drinking continued and the symptom remained untouched.¹³

Borrowing a medical analogy, Tiebout insisted that in treating cancer one is not primarily concerned about the etiology, but rather treating the malignancy which makes the etiological question secondary.

Exactly the same thinking applies to the treatment of alcoholism. It is a symptom which becomes dangerous in itself. Until it has been effectively stopped, little of real help can be offered. Alcoholics Anonymous stresses the danger of the first drink and Antabuse simply stops the ability to take it. Both attack the symptom and both have recorded a substantial measure of success.¹⁴

Once again, Tiebout learned from his clinical observations that

¹³Harry A. Tiebout, "Direct Treatment of a Symptom" (Center City, MN: Hazeldon, 1973) 3.

¹⁴Tiebout, "Direct Treatment," 3.

the approach used by A.A. was to focus on the primary concern, namely not to drink and that an analysis of motivation and causation was relatively unimportant. In one sense, it was a return to pre-Freudian ideas and approaches which made Tiebout's observation and approach unacceptable with his scientifically trained Freudian colleagues. Removal of the chemical substance and refraining from alcohol comes first and is tantamount to everything else which is done. In further developing his theory, Tiebout found that the source of strife and problem was the alcoholic's unwillingness to deal with the symptom and a resistance to giving up the alcohol.

The role of the therapist, professional worker or pastor working with the alcoholic needs to be clearly understood according to Tiebout's schema. This person must assume the role of a depriving entity if there is to be a chance of recovery. The ambivalent feelings of the alcoholic are noted,

And although the alcoholic may desperately want help, consciously, this does not necessarily overcome his unconscious resistance to such authoritative handling. The therapist inevitably acts as a depriving person.¹⁵

Further Tiebout notes in this connection,

"The therapist must not sidestep his depriving role; instead he must freely acknowledge it and let therapy begin right there. To do so clears the atmosphere and paves the way for establishing a sound working relationship."¹⁶

Another dimension which Tiebout introduced at this point was the role of the unconscious. Sigmund Freud brought this aspect of human

¹⁵Tiebout, "Direct Treatment," 6.

¹⁶Tiebout, "Direct Treatment," 6.

existence to light in his work. Tiebout discovered clinically that even though there was a conscious desire to be free from the fettering features of alcoholism, there was an unconscious, unspoken, unrevealed source of resistance to giving up the alcohol. The ambivalent feelings about giving up alcohol are transferred to the one who is dealing with the alcoholic. The person is seen in a dual role as a helper on a conscious level, but as depriver on the unconscious level. This becomes a source of conflict and contention in the therapeutic relationship.

Other critical conclusions drawn on the basis of working clinically with alcoholic patterns were made by Tiebout. He noted that the timing is important. Just as one cannot give something away s/he does not have, so also, one cannot give to another something which s/he does not want. Only at the right moment, the 'chairos' to use theological terminology, can the transition and transformation process be set in motion. The defensive armor which has protected the person from help and entrance from the outside needs to be permeated and destroyed. This is a principle factor which one must take cognizance of in working with the alcoholic. His/her self-deification, self-imposed posture of defiance and resistance becomes a barrier and block to recovery.

Tiebout discovered that this transformation process cannot be coerced, it must stem from the conscious and unconscious desire of the person to give in lest their lives cave in. Persistent pressure and persuasive pushing only serve to antagonize the person and drive him/her to greater isolation. The non-judgmental, non-dogmatic approach allows the individual the opportunity to learn for

himself/herself that self-regulation, self-control and willpower are ultimately fruitless in the battle against alcohol. The alcoholic, however, will feel differently about it, for s/he thinks that drinking in a controlled fashion is possible. Often it is only in the wake of such failure at control, that the alcoholic can be confronted with his/her behavior and a feeling of the need for help can be realized.¹⁷ Thus the person himself/herself comes to the conviction that they really are hopelessly enmeshed in the network of alcoholism and that struggles to free themselves result only in greater involvement. The principle of first things first is of monumental importance.

First the alcohol must be dealt with and eliminated from the scene before recovery can take place. The removal of the symptom is to invite the wrath of the victim, but the role of depriver is imperative for the helper if help is to be given. Removal of the alcohol is removal of a companion who has served as a crutch for crises, but progress towards recovery, growth, health and maturity are thwarted without this first necessary step.

With regard to the therapeutic process, it is virtually reversed. Whereas the conventional procedure is to seek the cause underlying the symptom, with alcoholism one must treat first the symptom before being concerned about the cause. Tiebout says,

This does not exclude the value of deep insights; it merely rechannels them into an understanding of why the patient blocks from taking the remedy prescribed. The study of causation is shifted from origins to the causes which obstruct the therapy. As they are

¹⁷Tiebout, "Direct Treatment," 9.

uncovered and resolved, not only is sobriety attained but the inner changes necessary to a sober existence can be and are developed.¹⁸

Not only is the therapeutic process reversed, but the role of the helper is likewise reversed. The conventional role was that of an advocate, the unconventional approach of Tiebout is that of the helper as seeming adversary. The professional helper does not engage in supporting and accepting the symptomatic behavior, but rather is involved in interrupting and depriving the person of alcohol which leads then to the possibility of transformation. Transformation is an impossibility while the person is drinking. When the alcohol is removed the possibility of transformation carries with it a greater degree of probability in the life of the alcoholic.

C. UNDERSTANDING OF CONVERSION

Because of the close affinity between religious conversion and what Tiebout observed happening with the alcoholic, he called the radical reversal in lifestyle a 'conversion' and spoke of it from a psychological perspective. He defined conversion in this way, "...conversion is a psychological event in which there is a major shift in personality manifestation."¹⁹ Tiebout goes on to explicate this in a fashion reminiscent of William James' definition of conversion. He says,

Whereas, before the patient was swayed by a set of predominantly hostile, negative attitudes, after the conversion process, the

¹⁸Tiebout, "Direct Treatment," 11.

¹⁹Harry A. Tiebout, "Conversion as a Psychological Phenomenon" (New York: National Council on Alcoholism, 1944) 1.

patient is swayed by a set of predominantly positive, affirmative ones.²⁰

His delineation of the experience of conversion for the alcoholic is close to the definition provided by this paper, namely a radical reversal in lifestyle. He indicates that before the experience of conversion the person is tense and depressed, aggressive or stubborn, beset by ambivalent feelings of inferiority and superiority, perfectionistic and rigidly idealistic, sensing loneliness and isolation, egocentric, defiant and walled off from others. These attributes are all reminiscent of the paradoxes articulated in chapter three.

Alcoholism is a basic dis-ease with life, a desire to be set apart and so gain an identity of distinction and uniqueness as a person. This is a basically healthy urge except when it becomes a neurotic compulsion as with the alcoholic. S/he needs to come to a point in which s/he can 'live and let live' to use a common cliché from Alcoholics Anonymous or as Tiebout states, "...to accept humbly and without rancor their difference from their fellows and at the same time permits them to accept the difference of their fellows from them."²¹

With the conversion experience the all consuming passion of the alcoholic is divested of its power and s/he is delivered from the negative forces which seemingly held the person in bondage. Tiebout frames it in this way,

When the wall suddenly melts as in a sweeping personality turnabout there develops a peculiar phenomenon which people conversant with religion refer to as 'a release of power'....Conflict, tension,

²⁰Tiebout, "Conversion," 2.

²¹Tiebout, "Conversion," 3.

doubt, anxiety, hostility, all dissolve as though they were nothing and the individual discovers himself on an exalted plane where he feels he is in communion with God, man, and all the creative forces of the universe.²²

Even though acknowledging that this can be a sudden and dramatic experience, Tiebout sees that most often it is a gradual re-awakening, re-orientation and re-styling of life. At one point he believed that about ten percent of the conversion experiences were dramatic while the other ninety were of the more gradual variety.²³

In the process, the attitude and disposition toward life is completely altered or transformed. It may be imaged graphically in this manner as noted below in Figure 3.

DURING ACTIVE DRINKING		DURING SOBRIETY
Tense and depressed	C	Relaxed
Active and Passive Aggression	O	Acceptance of life
Inferiority/Superiority	N	Achieving, not attaining
Perfectionistic/Idealistic strivings	V	Disappearance of competition and sense of guilt
Loneliness/Isolation	E	Interested in others
Egocentricity	R	Less self-centered
Defiance	S	Resentment disappears
Walled in stance	I	Dissolution of barriers
	O	
	N	

Fig. 3

²²Tiebout, "Conversion," 4.

²³Tiebout, "Conversion," 4.

Rather than a closed posture, there is an openness towards life. The turners 'away from life' to use Ford's terms begin to 'turn toward life' and embrace it with all of its negative and positive qualities. The conversion experience enables people to embrace reality with an equanimity unparalleled in their prior experience. Help from others is appreciated rather than depreciated, assistance is acknowledged as being necessary rather than refused as being patronizing. Conversion enables the person who experiences it to have a new lease on life, a phenomenon which is more readily experienced than explained.

Even though Tiebout describes the 'conversion' experience from a psychological perspective, he was the first to acknowledge that there is a religious dimension to each of the conversion episodes. He characterized religion as the cultural media whereby a positive outlook on life can be attained. Healthy religion should be about the business of tapping the potential and creative life force of each individual.²⁴

Tiebout rightly saw that religion was too often associated only with doctrine and dogma and not with spirituality and creativity. His conceptualization of religion is limited for he simply states that, "Its purpose is to influence man's thinking and feeling so as to produce and maintain positive feeling tones toward the world and the self."²⁵ He views religion purely from a functional perspective.

In the conclusion to his article on conversion, Tiebout himself acknowledged his conceptualization was limited. He writes,

I look forward to the time when our knowledge of religion and the

²⁴Tiebout, "Conversion," 11.

²⁵Tiebout, "Conversion," 11.

religious impulse will broaden to the point where we shall see more clearly the connections between the faith element in religion, the faith element inherent in the transfer and the faith element which goes with the general acceptance of life and living.²⁶

In this particular work, Tiebout strikes a significant chord of response in using the word 'conversion' as the vocabulary vehicle to explain the change process. There was the inexplicable factor which could not be psychologically or scientifically described. Though his concept ran counter to all conventional scientific procedure, nonetheless, Tiebout championed not only that which could be empirically verified, but also that which he experientially encountered in working with the alcoholics. The reality of the experience prompted him to turn to the act of surrender itself to investigate it more fully in the context of the therapeutic process.

D. UNDERSTANDING OF SURRENDER

His clinical observations of the conversion experience convinced Tiebout to come to this conclusion, "...the key to an understanding of that experience may be found in the act of surrender which, in my opinion, sets in motion the conversion switch."²⁷ Tiebout adds to his theory in this work by this important aspect of the surrender process,

With respect to the act of surrender, let me emphasize this point - it is an unconscious event, not willed by the patient even if he should desire to do so. It can occur only when an individual with

²⁶Tiebout, "Conversion," 11.

²⁷Harry A. Tiebout, "The Act of Surrender in the Therapeutic Process" (New York: National Council on Alcoholism, n.d.) 2.

certain traits in his unconscious mind becomes involved in a certain set of circumstances.²⁸

Tiebout is not in a position to comment on the process from a theological perspective, but what he describes is attributed to the work of God in traditional Christian theology, a consideration which will be considered in detail in chapter X.

He then cites the case of a man who remained entrenched in his alcoholism. Finally the family as well as the peer group at work decided to withdraw their support. The staff at the treatment center likewise indicated that it was up to him and that their support would be offered only as long as he made the decision to remain sober. The man finally gave in and acknowledged the fact that he had stopped fighting and with the surrender came a serenity he had not experienced before.

The turning point of the conversion experience for this man was when he himself signed the card for his treatment. This was an act of surrender on his part, a symbol acknowledging the fact that he was not in control of his life or his drinking.

Tiebout zeroes in on two qualities in the process which he feels must be articulated and dealt with. The first is defiance. Defiance is the quality which enables a person to disregard reality and live unperturbed. It is a way in which the alcoholic manages anxiety while at the same time it masquerades as a source of strength and confidence. It is a life posture which appears to be oblivious to reality.²⁹ He indicates that this particular disposition has some

²⁸Tiebout, "The Act of Surrender," 3.

²⁹Tiebout, "The Act of Surrender," 6.

very useful qualities as they come to expression in the alcoholic's life. Defiance is a tool for managing anxiety. In relationship to the alcoholic he says,

If you defy a fact and say it is not so and can succeed in doing so unconsciously, you can drink to the day of your death, forever denying the imminence of that fate. As one patient phrased it, 'My defiance was a cloak of armor.'³⁰

The defiance can also appear as inner strength and self-confidence, but that is primarily a cover-up for the depth of uncertainty which lurks in the depths of the alcoholic's mind. As with all of the qualities of the alcoholic, these qualities in moderation are necessary in order to live, but with the alcoholic, these particular traits are on the rampage, neurotically blown out of proportion and indulged in to excess. As one recovering alcoholic succinctly stated it, "For we alcoholics, anything worth doing is worth doing to excess!"

A second disposition which Tiebout came to see as being most dramatically displayed in the alcoholic was that of grandiosity.

Borrowing from the psychoanalytical perspective he writes,

...grandiosity springs from the persisting infantile ego which, as in other neurotic states, characteristically is filled with feelings of omnipotence, demands for direct gratification of wishes and a proneness to interpret frustration as evidence of rejection and lack of love.³¹

This disposition is indigenous to the plight of the alcoholic. When grandiosity is coupled with defiance, the two dispositions feed each other thus perpetuating the infantile approach to life.³²

³⁰Tiebout, "The Act of Surrender," 6.

³¹Tiebout, "The Act of Surrender," 6.

³²Tiebout, "The Act of Surrender," 7.

The key to understanding the paradoxes and conflicts in the alcoholic's life as noted before is that this is an unconscious process.

His unconscious mind rejects through its capacity for defiance and grandiosity what its conscious mind perceives. Hence, realistically, the individual is frightened by his drinking and at the same time is prevented from doing anything about it by the unconscious activity which can and does ignore or override the conscious mind.³³

Perhaps in more graphic fashion it may look like the diagram below in Figure 4.

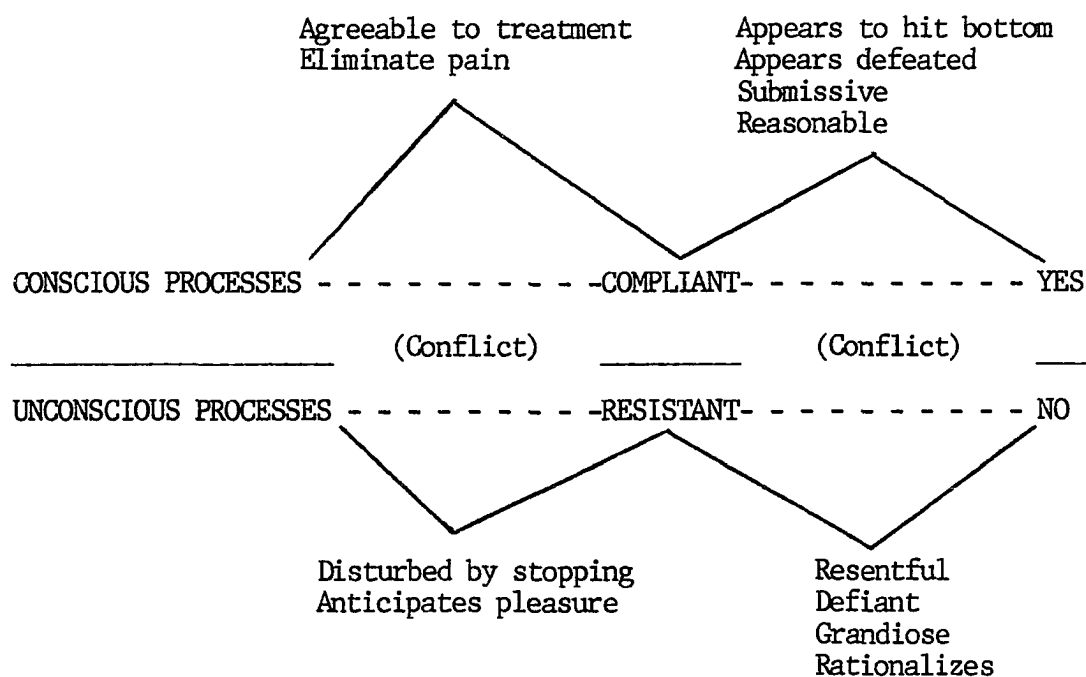


Fig. 4

Conflict is the dynamic which becomes apparent as the conscious and unconscious processes with their diametrically opposed directions mercilessly pull the alcoholic in two directions at the same time. The

³³Tiebout, "The Act of Surrender," 7.

crisis of the moment compels the alcoholic to follow the dictates of his/her conscious mind while the dynamics of the unconscious are simultaneously present, but less attractive at this juncture.

As the person is distanced from the crisis which precipitated the plea for help, the pervasive and persuasive unconscious processes begin to supervene into the conscious processes and take control. Rationalization, for example, becomes the primary process of self-deception, an attempt to salvage the 'big ego' which sees admission of the need for help as a weakness. The elimination of the existential pain results in the anticipation of pleasure which comes from drinking. The controlling thought now is, "It wasn't that bad, I can keep it in control this time." Another way of expressing the same truth is that for the alcoholic his/her memory is painfully short. The compulsion to drink and the deception and delusion that s/he can return to controlled drinking obviates the obvious and obliterates the truth expressed and experienced during the crisis. The compulsion to drink has erased the painful memories of prior drinking and the inevitable circular pattern of the disease is once again set in motion.

What is necessary in Tiebout's estimation is that all support for the person needs to be withdrawn so that s/he might experience the painful consequences of his/her drinking. This is especially effective if the social support system has been patient until this point. The alcoholic must come to the personal conviction that s/he is as one recovering alcoholic put it, 'totally defeated.' As long as there remains a vestigial residue of defiance and grandiosity, the person is not ready for a clean start. The negative and defiant feelings must be

scoured out, the self-deceptive games scrubbed and the entire personality rinsed clean.

The results of this process invariably bring tranquility. "Surrender means cessation of fight and cessation of fight seems logically to be followed by internal peace and quiet."³⁴ Tiebout could not scientifically explain this phenomenon, but did affirm that it occurred when the person surrendered. To use the terminology of this dissertation, surrender results in sobriety with serenity, a radical reversal of lifestyle, and a transformation of the person. Tiebout says nothing of the family or significant social network of the alcoholic, but the same dynamics apply. Surrender of the alcoholic and his/her problem is the key which unlocks the door to peace with oneself, God and the world. There is a significant and substantial difference between submission and surrender, as a matter of fact, they should be seen as opposites.

In submission, an individual accepts reality consciously but not, unconsciously. He accepts as a practical fact that he cannot at that moment lick reality, but lurking in his unconscious is the feeling, 'there'll come a day' which implies no real acceptance and demonstrates conclusively that the struggle is still on.³⁵

At this juncture Tiebout offers a more refined definition of the word surrender.

It is to be viewed as a moment when the unconscious forces of defiance and grandiosity actually cease effectively to function. When that happens, the individual is wide open to reality; he can listen and learn without conflict and fighting back. He is receptive to life, not antagonistic. He senses a feeling of relatedness and at-oneness which becomes the source of an inner peace and serenity, the possession of which frees the individual

³⁴Tiebout, "The Act of Surrender," 9.

³⁵Tiebout, "The Act of Surrender," 9.

from the compulsion to drink. In other words, an act of surrender is an occasion wherein the individual no longer fights life, but accepts it.³⁶

The emotional tenor of the person following this experience is that s/he refrains from grandiosity, fantasy, defiance and tenaciously persists in accepting reality with all of its pain and pleasure. The person is now capable of embracing reality rather than running from it. His/her life is no longer dominated by a sense of 'must' nor is it viewed as fatalistically determined. Surrender enables the positive and creative forces of the person to be maximized.³⁷ To utilize Karen Horney's terminology in conjunction with Tiebout's concepts, the 'tyranny of the should' has been broken and the individual has become free to be. The act of surrender is followed by the state of surrender as Tiebout conceives of it. The person is giving up the defiance and grandiosity and is gaining peace and serenity.

Tiebout delineates from his clinical observation three types of surrender and surrender reaction as he refines his theory. First there is the surrender which results in genuine growth and maturation. Secondly, there is a kind of surrender which enables the person to become sober, but s/he remains at that level and through meetings and daily reminders must constantly work at the level of surrender and not realize much growth. Thirdly, there is the kind of surrender which eliminates the alcohol, but little appreciable change in lifestyle is experienced.³⁸

³⁶Tiebout, "The Act of Surrender," 9-10.

³⁷Tiebout, "The Act of Surrender," 10.

³⁸Tiebout, "The Act of Surrender," 12.

The surrender process and aftermath as Tiebout describes it clinically is remarkably reminiscent of a dominical aphorism from the New Testament. He states,

The phenomenon of release which makes people realize that, in losing their lives, they are finding them becomes explicable if one sees that the surrender which precedes the sense of release stills the inner fight and hostility, thus permitting the spontaneous creative elements of the Inner Self outlets for expression.³⁹

Rather than reducing the experience to insight, Tiebout boldly asserts,

Actually, if you examine the state of mind which breaks through when the resistance melts, you will find it is strikingly parallel to the positive state of mind which an individual may have after a conversion experience.⁴⁰

Interestingly enough from Tiebout's perspective, the act of surrender is not primarily an isolated occurrence, it must be repeated and reinforced. Often there are a series of little surrenders. A surrender may be followed by new negative feelings and resistances which likewise need to be surrendered. It is only at the point where the defiance and grandiosity are given up that the person reaches what Tiebout termed a 'settled state' of surrender.⁴¹ The parallels between this observation and a fundamental tenant of Christian theology with regard to daily repentance is notable.

Tiebout affirmed the reality of what he clinically observed though he candidly admitted that it was difficult if not impossible to empirically document. He was reluctant to use theological categories

³⁹Tiebout, "The Act of Surrender," 13.

⁴⁰Tiebout, "The Act of Surrender," 13.

⁴¹Tiebout, "The Act of Surrender," 14.

in his writing, yet forcefully articulated the fact that religion was at the center of what occurred. There is yet one other refinement of his theory in this psychotherapeutic paradigm which is critical to his understanding of the recovery of the alcoholic.

E. SURRENDER VERSUS COMPLIANCE

Reference was made in Tiebout's article on surrender to the distinction between surrender and submission. He noted that surrender led to acceptance, but says, "What I failed to see and emphasize was the very important relationship between surrender and the capacity for acceptance."⁴² Accompanying the act of surrender must also be the capacity to accept totally and fully, both consciously and unconsciously the reality of the situation. Tiebout's point is that the word 'accept' is often used in the literature, but how 'acceptance' occurs is rarely addressed. He defines acceptance as being synonymous with surrender in this manner,

Acceptance appears to be a state of mind in which the individual accepts rather than rejects or resists: he is able to take things in, to go along with, to cooperate, to be receptive. Contrariwise he is not argumentative, quarrelsome, irritable or contentious.⁴³

Acceptance by its very definition cannot be coerced by external or by internal means, one must have a feeling or conviction to use Tiebout's terminology. Much of what passes for acceptance is simply lip service which can be described by the words, "...submission, resignation,

⁴²Harry A. Tiebout, "Surrender Versus Compliance in Therapy With Special Reference to Alcoholism," Quarterly Journal of Studies on Alcoholism 14:1 (1953) 59.

⁴³Tiebout, "Surrender," 60.

yielding, compliance, acknowledgment, concession..." all of which carry with them a 'feeling of reservation' or residual feelings of nonacceptance.⁴⁴ Tiebout is quick to reiterate that this is an unconscious phenomenon. At the conscious level the person can make a decision to accept his/her alcoholism, but often the unconscious dimension of the person does not accept that as noted in Fig. 4.

Tiebout's approach contradicts an assumption accepted by many therapeutic approaches, namely that insight or recognition of the problem is sufficient to precipitate change. He says,

Uncovering reasons for behavior, no matter how convincing, does not and cannot insure acceptance of those reasons. Acceptance is a step beyond recognition, a further operation in the process of therapy.⁴⁵

Acceptance for many smacks of passivity and yielding up the reins of one's life and so, "Powerful forces are aligned against acceptance, producing in the individual extreme conflict which must be resolved if the capacity for acceptance is ever to develop."⁴⁶

It was at this point in his research that Tiebout felt that the word compliance needed to be emphasized more and articulated more clearly. He says,

Compliance needs careful definition. It means agreeing, going along, but in no way implies enthusiastic, wholehearted assent and approval. There is a willingness not to argue or resist but the cooperation is a bit grudging, a little forced; one is not entirely happy about agreeing. Compliance is, therefore, a word which portrays mixed feelings, divided sentiments.⁴⁷

⁴⁴Tiebout, "Surrender," 61.

⁴⁵Tiebout, "Surrender," 61.

⁴⁶Tiebout, "Surrender," 62.

⁴⁷Tiebout, "Surrender," 62-63.

Again he emphasizes that this is not a conscious process, but something which lurks in the recesses of the unconscious. The immediate pain of the situation compels the alcoholic to agree to most anything.

However, on the unconscious level there is conflict. S/he can hardly dispute the facts associated with destructive drinking, and therefore complies with the idea of treatment. However, as the pain of the drinking recedes, the unconscious processes stir once again which prompt the person to drink since s/he did not accept the reality of his/her condition.⁴⁸ It is obvious that a conscious-unconscious conflict is established so that the person feels somewhat schizoid in his/her activities and attitudes. The conflict which occurs has two subsequent results, a sense of guilt because of the disparity between the outward affirmation of the need for help and the inner protestation against any help. The other problem which results is an increased sense of inferiority.

The unconscious situation can be outlined thus: Compliance is a form of agreeing, of never standing up for one-self. When that response is automatic, routine and unvarying, the individual gets a feeling that he cannot stand up for himself; this inevitably augments his inferiority problems.⁴⁹

The feeling of inferiority sets in motion the cyclical pattern outlined in detail in chapter three. Thus Tiebout substantiates the position and thesis of this paper with regard to conflict being the primary concern of the alcoholic which requires a satisfactory resolution. He says, "Much of the apparent dual personality of

⁴⁸Tiebout, "Surrender," 63.

⁴⁹Tiebout, "Surrender," 65.

alcoholics becomes understandable if their behavior is seen in the light of conflicting trends."⁵⁰

Just as compliance is registered in the unconscious, so also is the subsequent shift to surrender. When genuine surrender occurs, "...this new honesty arises automatically, spontaneously; the individual does not have the slightest inkling that this development is in prospect."⁵¹ Compliance is really more than partial surrender, it is the antithesis of surrender as the process is outlined by Tiebout. It is the primary barrier which stands between the alcoholic and recovery in this schematization. Tiebout summarizes at the end of his paper in this manner, "...surrender is essential to wholehearted acceptance and that unconscious compliance, which is a halfway surrender, can be a vital block to genuine surrender."⁵²

Tiebout discovered an extremely important process as it relates to the recovery of the alcoholic. His cause was not championed not only because it went against the stream, but also because the study lacked the sophistication of scientific schemitization and empirical substantiation. This fact did not deter Tiebout in the least, since he was more interested in people and the pragmatic possibilities in recovery than in impressing the academic world with an intricate and complex theory. The fact that the process continues to be the format and formula for success in Alcoholics Anonymous is reason enough to lend credence to its validity and veracity.

⁵⁰Tiebout, "Surrender," 65.

⁵¹Tiebout, "Surrender," 66.

⁵²Tiebout, "Surrender," 67.

F. CRITIQUE OF TIEBOUT

Initially, his understanding and application of the concept of surrender and conversion therapy is limited to the person who suffers from alcoholism. It is a principle thesis of this paper that the same dynamics are applicable to the wider social system of the family or significant other persons. The family of the alcoholic experiences resistance, defensiveness, denial and compliance in relationship to the disease. Thus the whole issue must be considered from a systemic perspective. Just as eliminating the alcohol for the alcoholic is not sufficient for recovery, so also eliminating the alcoholic from the family system is not sufficient for the family's recovery. The members of the family will continue to suffer from the deeply ingrained patterns of action and reaction whether the alcoholic is present or not because it has become their lifestyle.

Just as the alcoholic cannot recover as long as s/he believes that s/he can control the drinking, so also recovery for the family is not possible as long as family members believe that they can control the alcoholic. Family members in the recovery process also compliantly speak about surrender, but often this is a cautious concession of control as an expediency measure and they have not 'surrendered' the alcoholic at all. There is still, perhaps only unconsciously; the need to control, direct, cure and take care of the alcoholic. This neurotic trend needs to be interrupted if the entire family is to recover.

A second aspect of Tiebout's theory is that it does not develop the understanding of the religious dynamics even though he acknowledges it as being central. Perhaps as a psychiatrist he felt uncomfortable

about that dimension which would be another discipline, yet he knew implicitly that the very essence of the issue lay in this realm. His conceptualization of the power and potential of religion is much too superficial in comparison with the importance which he ascribes to it as the determinative factor in conversion. It is the purpose of this paper to develop that perspective in greater depth since it is appropos for the person in pastoral care to utilize the traditions and resources of theology as they come to impact the pastoral care posture of the pastor.

Thirdly, Tiebout presents no model in his approach which will give any clues to the manner in which the groundwork for the possibility of the surrender process to occur can be established. It is clear that as an unconscious process, it is not something which can be coerced internally nor cajoled by external manipulation. However, the opportunity for preparing for the possibility of surrender through the intervention of significant others in the social system is an aspect which needs to be investigated. The alcoholic may not have to 'hit bottom' in Tiebout's terms, but the bottom can perhaps be raised before irreparable physiological and psychological damage has been done. Limiting the approach to the individual afflicted narrows the possibilities. Including and working with the social system presents a wider selection of choices for interrupting the process systemically.

Despite these limitations in Tiebout's theory and approach, he has provided a structural foundation upon which to build. His insights are both accurate and perceptive in providing a psychotherapeutic paradigm in recovery from alcoholism. His observations and theories are integral to the understanding of conversion as a pivotal concept in the transformation process.

CHAPTER V

ELABORATION AND EXPANSION OF TIEBOUT'S THEORIES

In the last chapter the basic components of Tiebout's theory of recovery as he learned it from A.A. were delineated. His observations represented a major breakthrough in terms of psychotherapeutic practices and procedures. The critique of Tiebout suggested that his work was foundational and that it requires expansion and elaboration to more fully understand and appropriate.

Utilizing the language of transformation as is presented in this dissertation, the focus of this chapter will be tripartite. First of all, there is an expanded analysis of the social, family and personal dynamics which are operative prior to recovery, but integral to the whole transformation process. Secondly, an elaboration is made upon the centrality of crisis in the conversion event itself as the 'turning point' leading to recovery and transformation. Finally, a presentation of what can occur in the ongoing transformation process once the alcoholic has abstained from drinking is made. It is important to have a sense of the total picture to more adequately understand the transformation process.

A. DYNAMICS PRIOR TO RECOVERY

If the process leading to surrender and subsequent recovery could be easily orchestrated and executed, the disease of alcoholism would be quickly obliterated. Unfortunately this is not the case. In

the dynamics prior to recovery, one becomes aware of the elaborate defense system erected on all levels of interchange socially and personally.

In the social system there is denial of alcoholism which encourages the hostile dependent relationships referred to in chapter I. This is true in the medical profession, the legal arena as well as all other social systems. An illustration of this is cited by H.B.M. Murphy¹ in studying and analyzing the role of physicians in relationship to diagnosing the problem. Social reaction to alcoholism can be amusement, disgust or simply a passive attitude which fails to take seriously the nature of the disease. Society has adopted an ostrich attitude towards the disease hoping that it will go away if it is not seen.

The family likewise marshals various defense mechanisms in order to attempt to deal or cope with the situation. These serve as monumental barriers to recovery as engendered by the family system. The last line of defensiveness is the alcoholic himself/herself. Keller advocates the softening of the defense mechanisms at the appropriate time so as to set the recovery process in motion.² Johnson substantiates Tiebout's contention that the defenses of the alcoholic are unconscious even as the process of addiction itself is unconscious. There is a general deterioration in the alcoholic's condition and s/he finally loses contact with himself/herself as a

¹H.B.M. Murphy, "Hidden Barriers to the Diagnosis and Treatment of Alcoholism and Other Alcohol Misuse," Journal of Studies on Alcoholism 41 (1980) 417-428.

²John Keller, Ministering to Alcoholics (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1966) 74-76.

result. Johnson writes,

His defense system continues to grow, so that he can survive in the face of his problems. The greater the pain he suffers, the higher and more rigid the defenses become; and this whole process is unconscious. The alcoholic does not know what is happening inside of himself. Finally, he actually becomes a victim of his own defense mechanisms.³

Johnson further contends that behind the strong defenses is a sense of self hatred which serves to complicate and compound the position of the alcoholic. The alcoholic is unaware of this destructive process which increases self-hate and impairs his/her judgment.⁴

The defenses are so strong that they become as one alcoholic described it like an iron-clad plate of armor which protects the person from reality. It is imperative to understand this functional use of the defense system before one can even begin to understand the dynamics of surrender. This is a situation which renders the alcoholic incapable of understanding the situation and literally immobilizes him/her to do anything about it. "Moreover, the problem is being compounded by the fact that these defenses, by locking in the negative feelings, have now created a mass of free-floating anxiety, guilt, shame, and remorse which becomes chronically present."⁵ In addition to that, rationalization, projection and denial preclude the alcoholic's ability to identify the problem. The self-delusion becomes his/her reality and the person is rendered incapable of separating fact

³Vernon Johnson, I'll Quit Tomorrow (New York: Harper & Row, 1973) 24.

⁴Johnson, 25.

⁵Johnson, 25.

from fiction.

Utilizing the schema of Karen Horney, it can be said that the alcoholic is using the defense system to shore up the sagging 'idealized image.' The image is far removed from reality which leads Stewart to conclude,

The alcoholic with his perfectionistic ideals is guilt laden and rigid. He has an idea of himself as he thinks he ought to be, an idea in conflict with what he vaguely suspects to be his real nature.⁶

Of all of the defense mechanisms employed to evade reality and the necessity of seeking help, denial is the most prominent and therefore deserves special consideration.

1. Denial as a Primary Defense Mechanism

Denial is evident on all levels of interaction and existence in the social system. People in the helping professions are extremely reticent to attribute difficulties in the family system to alcoholism. There is usually the need to attach some other sophisticated kind of nomenclature to the relational dynamics operative in the person's family or social network. A diagnosis of alcoholism on the part of any professional person is rare. As a result there is not direct treatment of the symptom, or the 'runaway symptom' to use Tiebout's phrase, but rather the denial of the symptom or at best a passing acknowledgment of it while the search goes on for some kind of intrapsychic causation.

From a family systems perspective, Kellerman has written, "The

⁶David A. Stewart, Thirst for Freedom (Toronto: Musson, 1960) 101.

Merry-Go-Round Named Denial" in which he articulates in clear fashion the systemic issues involved in denial. Kellerman presents the issue in dramatic form indicating that one cannot become an alcoholic without the assistance of other people in the social network, particularly those in the nuclear family. He sees 'denial' as being primary.

The name of the play and the key word in the entire illness is 'Denial,' for there is constant verbal contradiction of what is happening and what is being said by all the actors in the play. ⁷If the play were done in pantomime, it would be far less confusing.

The alcoholic engages in denial through concealment of the amount which s/he drinks thereby covertly acknowledging that the drinking has moved beyond the socially acceptable amount. The loss of control is a key factor in diagnosing that the person is alcoholic. Often a boisterous and omnipotent attitude is demonstrated by the alcoholic brought about by the action of the alcohol on the brain. The allegedly independent person gets into a crisis and becomes very dependent as noted by the paradoxes of conflict outlined in chapter three.

In the social matrix Kellerman identifies the 'enabler' in this drama as the one who attempts for a variety of reasons to rescue the alcoholic from the crisis or problem. The role of the 'enabler' is often played by an outsider, rather than a family member, but this is not always the case. Members of the 'helping professions' such as pastors, doctors, lawyers and social workers who have had no training in the dynamics of the disease are the most prominent enablers. Their well-intentioned efforts at helping often constitute rescue operations

⁷Joseph L. Kellerman, Alcoholism: A Merry-Go-Round Named Denial (Center City, MN: Hazelden, n.d.) 5-6.

for the alcoholic. As a result the alcoholic never has to suffer the pain and consequences of his/her drinking and therefore has no motivation to change. Kellerman suggests that, "Rescue operations are just as compulsive as drinking."⁸

With each rescue comes reinforcement for the alcoholic that no matter what the crisis, the enabler can be depended upon to bail him/her out of trouble.

Another actor in the social network drama Kellerman designates as the victim. "The Victim is the person who assumes responsibility for getting the work done if the alcoholic is absent due to drinking or is half on and half off the job due to a hangover."⁹ Thus the victim may be a friend at work. Personal and professional loyalties and friendship allegedly are at stake and the victim seeks to serve the role of covering up as does the enabler.

The Victim, in effect, saves the job just as the Enabler saved the alcoholic from the crisis. In this scene we become aware of the fact that this is not the first time such an event has occurred and will not be the last one.¹⁰

The final actor involved in this scenario Kellerman calls the 'provocatrix,' usually the wife or mother of the alcoholic, if the alcoholic is male.

She is provoked by the recurrence of drinking episodes, but she holds the family together despite the disrupting factors of alcoholism. In turn she becomes the source of provocation, and controls, coerces, adjusts, never gives up, never gives in, never lets go but never forgets.¹¹

⁸Kellerman, 7.

⁹Kellerman, 7.

¹⁰Kellerman, 7.

¹¹Kellerman, 8.

Kellerman suggests that another name for this person might be the 'compensator' because this person is always adjusting to every situation which occurs. With a history of assuming this kind of role, the person adjusts, readjusts and finally maladjusts to the situation. If the alcoholic is male, the sexist orientation of contemporary society exacerbates the problem.

In addition to the natural role of wife, housekeeper and possibly earning part of the bread, she becomes nurse, doctor and counselor. She cannot play these roles without injury to herself and to her husband. Yet everything in our present society conditions the wife to play the role of Provocatrix. If she does not play it, she goes against what society conceives the role of wife to be.¹²

In this portion of the drama in which everyone is involved in the covering up and denial, "The alcoholic in his helpless condition has been rescued, put back on the job and restored as a member of the family."¹³ S/he appears to be doing well, but the drama is about to be repeated with greater intensity and the magnitude of the situation and its scope begin to swell. The alcoholic vehemently denies any problems. Any problems which do exist s/he will likely blame on the family.¹⁴

The alcoholic is aware of the truth on some level, but cannot tolerate it. This feeling which is then compounded by guilt, shame, remorse and the awareness of increasing dependency sets in motion the cycle once again. Even as the Enabler, Victim and Provocatrix act out their respective parts, so also the alcohol, true to form, accomplishes its task of obliterating the psychic pain engendered by the situation.

¹²Kellerman, 8.

¹³Kellerman, 8.

¹⁴Kellerman, 8.

The alcoholic drinks to ease the pain and the saga becomes a monotonous repetition or 'merry-go-round' unless there is an interruption in the total cycle. If there is no intervention the insanity of the scenario goes on ad infinitum.

The validity of Kellerman's description and analysis cannot be underscored too heavily. The denial dimension of the disease involves complicity on the part of the whole social network. Without the conspiracy of silence and the collusion of the actors in the drama, the drinking is perpetuated. Thus, "Denial of dependency on alcohol is the most prominent of the defense mechanisms employed by alcohol dependents and is an integral part of the alcohol dependency itself."¹⁵

Blane describes denial in this way,

Severe denial is resistant to change and does not fluctuate with circumstances. Denial is also accompanied by an unconscious and irrational fear that to accept the existence of what is denied is to destroy oneself. Further, what is denied is grossly apparent to everyone but the denier and usually has to do with a major aspect of life. Finally, the consequences of denial permeate and affect one's entire existence.¹⁶

It is not only fear, but also pride which enters into the denial system. It is difficult to come to terms with the fact that one's behavior is beyond conscious control and one's decision making powers destroyed. In a society which values self-determination, individual freedom and free will; admission of loss of control is an affront to one's dignity and personal pride.¹⁷ The denial system works hand in

¹⁵Sally L. Perry et al, The Rehabilitation of the Alcoholic Dependent (Lexington, MA: Heath, 1970) 7-8.

¹⁶Howard T. Blane, The Personality of the Alcoholic (New York: Harper & Row, 1968) 48.

¹⁷Blane, 50.

hand with the alibi system and both must be interrupted in order that the pastor or professional might find a chink in the heavy defense armor. It is difficult to permeate that defense because the person is so fearfully concerned about being found out. At best there is partial admission of a problem. The vacillation is accurately described by Blane.

In each instance the individual sways back and forth between wish and reality: when the wish dominates, denial is intense; when reality dominates, denial is weak....With the alcoholic this alternation reflects an internal conflict between the wish that he were free of alcohol and the inner knowledge that he is not.¹⁸

The most obvious way of breaking into the denial pattern is to deal with the systemic dimension of the disease. By removing the crutches of dependency the person will have to suffer the consequences of his/her alcoholic behavior.¹⁹ The texture of the denial will also have an impact on the manner in which the person will respond to treatment. Blum and Blum note this in quoting a study which substantiates this point,

Moore and Murphy (1961) point out that although the degree of denial at admission has some significance, the more important prognostic feature is its relative rigidity or fluidity. In their experience, successful treatment is related to the patient's capacity for a decrease in denial.²⁰

It is in permeating the defense mechanisms that the initial breakthrough is accomplished, but even at this juncture, the professional counselor or pastor meets with strong resistance.

¹⁸Blane, 49.

¹⁹Blane, 56.

²⁰Eva Maria and Richard Blum, Alcoholism (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1967) 229.

2. Role of Resistance

Resistance as an outgrowth of denial is encountered on multi-levels of experience in working with the alcoholic. "In all these conditions, the individual's resistance, conditioned probably by both hereditary and environmental factors, occupies a dominant position.²¹ It is complicated by the fact that its impact is on a dual level which compounds the difficulty in aiding the person to get to a point where surrender and transformation are viable.

Resistance is to be found not only in the physical factors of addiction, but also in the stubborn persistent traces of pleasurable sensation lodged deep in the memory and in the dark recesses of your feelings....What is most elusive and difficult about resistance is that it is largely unconscious and unintentional. Most therapists and patients mean well. It is the unknown or uncontrolled forces in people which put obstacles in a well meant path to their goals.²²

Even under optimum conditions, "There is always a residue of these resistances which remains impulsive and unconscious. That is why sobriety is a life time's job."²³ This supports a major premise of Tiebout as he observed the process of recovery. There is an ambivalence about recovery which is explicable only on the basis of the conscious-unconscious conflict which he first brought to light.

Resistance implies the unwillingness to give up what one has. As distorted and bizarre as an alcoholic's life and that of his/her family may become, yet, it is their life and it is difficult to envision life any differently no matter how desperately it may be

²¹Blum and Blum, 307.

²²Stewart, 289.

²³Stewart, 300.

desired. It requires no less than a radical reversal in lifestyle for all involved, giving up the old patterns, alibis and games and embracing a new way of approaching reality.

Surrender is not accomplished through insight, not even by self-acceptance and self-knowledge. The first step must be a deep desire to want to recover. This begins with the person himself/herself.

The act of surrender happens in the alcoholic himself. No one else can surrender for him. The person helping the alcoholic recover can do much to induce the desire to stop drinking, but he cannot hand him over this desire and the surrender which follows....It has to be this deep dynamic quality in order to reach and oust the defiant resistance to recovery. This resistance is as deeply lodged as the forces which remove it.²⁴

Part of the difficulty is lodged in the conflict between not wanting to be different from other people and thus conspicuous while at the same time sensing the need to be unique and different. The fact that the uniqueness comes about as a result of having the label 'alcoholic' is what resistance is all about. One recovering alcoholic put it this way, "I had the need to be different, to be special, but I sure didn't want to be special or different when it came to drinking."

Resistance to recovery from the perspective of this paper is not limited to physiological and psychological factors alone. There is a resistance likewise to the spiritual dimension of recovery as enjoined by this approach. The tide of secularism has inundated the general populace to the point that it threatens to drown out the spiritual dynamics of human existence. The message of the secular age is that in large part people are masters of their fate and captains of their

²⁴Stewart, 116-117.

souls. For the alcoholic who is already suffering from delusions of omnipotence and self-deification, the thought of religion is particularly odious. It runs contrary to the very structure and nature of his/her own idealized image.

The Big Book states this concern most clearly,

Many of us have been so touchy that even casual reference to spiritual things made us bristle with antagonism. This sort of thinking had to be abandoned. Though some of us resisted, we found no great difficulty in casting aside such feelings. Faced with alcoholic destruction, we soon became as open minded on spiritual matters as we had tried to be on other questions. In this respect alcohol was a great persuader. It finally beat us into a state of reasonableness. Some times this was a tedious process; we hope no one else will be prejudiced for as long as some of us were.²⁵

If it were suggested to the alcoholic that there is a Power which exists which is greater than the self, immediate resistance would be encountered. "...right there our perverse streak comes to the surface and we laboriously set out to convince ourselves it isn't so."²⁶

The question then arises as to the manner in which the conditions can be established so that the possibility of surrender can be experienced. It must be a situation in which both the conscious and unconscious processes are touched. This is not something which someone can do for the alcoholic, matter of fact, s/he cannot do it for himself/herself and yet, the process does not occur in a vacuum. It remains then to investigate more thoroughly the dynamic which occasions change.

²⁵Alcoholics Anonymous (New York: Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, 1955) 30.

²⁶Alcoholics Anonymous, 49.

B. DYNAMICS OF CONVERSION - THE CENTRALITY OF CRISIS

It seems that a crisis situation may prove to be the most fruitful avenue of approach which may constitute the 'turning point' for the alcoholic. As noted previously, the social system likewise needs to be involved in this dimension as in all others in relationship to the alcoholic. Denial, covering up, the conspiracy of silence are all mechanisms of circumventing rather than confronting the situation. Without the pain of crisis, it seems that the persistent cyclical pattern of the alcoholic prevails. The social matrix affords the possibility through the roles which the various significant people play to effect a break in the pattern.

The crisis may come about as a result of the natural course and consequences of the drinking. It may be the threatened loss of a job, family, freedom, health, wealth or life itself. There is always a crisis and usually a series of crises which enter the life of every alcoholic.

For example, a conviction of drunk driving with a period of incarceration may be a painful enough experience that the person may consider receiving some assistance, which would be the first step in the surrender process. The legal and economic entanglements which occur may be blessings in disguise as precipitators for change. If the pain of such situations is not removed by the well-intentioned, but misguided rescuer, the unconscious denial and resistance to reality may begin to soften.

A model of intervention which has proven to be of value is that

designed by Vernon Johnson. It is based principally on a kind of reality therapy approach to dealing with the individual and his/her family. Reality is presented in an honest, but nonjudgmental fashion. Johnson contends that, "...even at his sickest, he is capable of accepting some useful portion of reality, if that reality is presented to him in forms he can receive."²⁷ The reality process in Johnson's schema is to have significant other persons in the alcoholic's life draw up a list of specific behaviors which the alcoholic has engaged in. The purpose is to demonstrate to the alcoholic that his/her behavior has been unacceptable. In clear and systematic fashion the case is presented to the drinking person in order to jar him/her back to reality and to realize how destructive the behavior has been.

Johnson cites the case of a physician as an illustration of a family who arranged for a successful confrontation and whose purpose was accomplished in the process, namely convincing the one drinking to enter treatment.²⁸ The rules for the confrontation process include:

- 1) Meaningful persons must present the facts or data. It must be people who impact his/her life and vice versa or the confrontation will not be effective.
- 2) The data presented should be specific and descriptive of events which have happened or conditions which exist. This must be more than hearsay or projection, the incidents must have a firm base in reality.
- 3) The tone of the confrontation must not be judgmental. Judgmental and condemnatory attitudes serve only to

²⁷Johnson, 82.

²⁸Johnson, 44-49.

thicken the defense mechanisms. 4) The evidence presented needs to be tied directly to the drinking. In this manner the person can see that it is in fact the drinking which caused the problems. 5) The information regarding his/her behavior should be presented in detail so that it registers as fact. Johnson suggests that movies or tapes are helpful so that the evidence is graphic. 6) The goal of this kind of confrontation is to enable the person to see himself/herself realistically and so be motivated to seek help. Finally, the choices available for aid in the situation should be made known to the person.²⁹

Johnson's approach is a planned program of intervention. This in and of itself does not constitute surrender or transformation, but it creates the atmosphere and environment conducive to the possibility of surrender. The attitude and disposition of those involved in the confrontation process likewise is critical if this approach is to work. The purpose is to precipitate a crisis through confrontation. There is a distinction as Johnson notes between attacking and confrontation.

Confrontations are often mistaken as being forms of attacking the individual. Attacking, obviously serves only to raise defenses and if employed at all should be used only and deliberately to make defenses more apparent. Confrontation, on the other hand, is defined as a description of the other person, made in such a way as is most likely to be receivable by him.³⁰

Blane substantiates Johnson's point in his clinical observations.³¹

²⁹Johnson, 49-51.

³⁰Johnson, 71.

³¹Blane, 57.

A crisis severe enough to precipitate change does not always appear on the horizon at the right moment. As noted with the Johnson approach, it often times must be staged by significant members of the social network. Ruth Fox writes,

Pressure toward treatment will usually need to be exerted by the spouse, friend, or employer. If this pressure does not bring the alcoholic into treatment, it may even be necessary to precipitate a crisis with a temporary suspension from the job, or by the wife's arranging for a temporary separation. Few alcoholics will face giving up alcohol until they are threatened with the loss of something precious - a job, a wife (or husband), health, money, prestige, etc. If 'bringing things to a head' is postponed too long, the alcoholism may progress to a point where it is no longer reversible. Even though they may find it embarrassing, financially trying, or emotionally upsetting, the persons who really care about the alcoholic should somehow find the courage to take definitive steps and carry them out. The life and career of the alcoholic and the welfare of the whole family are at stake.³²

The confrontation process is not nearly as easy as it may seem. It takes an immense amount of courage on the part of the family or significant social network. In the past they have been accustomed to accomodating rather than holding the alcoholic accountable for his/her actions. The family is in dire need of support at this juncture.

In terms of the care of the family, it seemed judicious to me that the family have a firm footing in the self-help group called Al-Anon before a confrontation is considered. This marvelous group gives information about the disease, but more importantly, an understanding of oneself and one's reactions to the disease and the family member's complicity in its perpetuation. In a group of like-minded and accepting people who are experiencing the same pain, but also realizing growth in relationship to themselves and others, a

³²Ruth Fox (ed.) Alcoholism (New York: Random House, 1955) 329-330.

firm foundation can be established for the kind of support which is necessary in order to engage in the confrontive process. More will be said about this group in the next chapter.

Thus whether the crisis develops naturally as an outgrowth of the disease or is arbitrarily constructed by the social system, it can be the occasion for the person to have to seriously consider what the drinking is doing to him/her. The crisis may be sudden and dramatic or it may be a developmental crisis over a period of time comprised of a cumulation of several incidents. The important issue is to utilize the crisis situation as a 'turning point' in the life of the alcoholic. The professional counselor or pastor finds himself/herself in a new situation as orchestrator and perhaps facilitator of this kind of confrontation.

Most are trained for crisis intervention, few are trained in intervention through crisis. There needs to be a point of departure for the recovery process and the moment of crisis properly understood and utilized is most often the occasion for the beginning of healing.

1. Dealing With 'Compliance' As a Response to Crisis

As noted in the last chapter, Tiebout uncovered an important dimension of the recovery process when he distinguished between compliance or submission and surrender. It is difficult to determine which of the dynamics is operative in the individual because the compliance is an unconscious disposition while consciously the person is saying and even desiring something else. The professional counselor or pastor must be aware of the marks of compliance so as to be

sensitive to the distinction between submission and surrender. Blane makes this observation,

When the alcoholic presents himself as an alcoholic in need and desirous of changing himself, but without any external inducement or threat and without relating any history of struggle in becoming aware of being alcoholic, it is unlikely that the drive toward change is strong enough to subdue the pleasure of drinking....His acceptance and awareness that he is under alcohol's control obtains only at a superficial level and fails to withstand stronger forces within him.³³

People who work professionally with the alcoholic have that kind of a sensitivity and often remark in relationship to a given person that the recovery process is "much too easy." In other words, a different dynamic other than a desire for health is likely at work. "...facile admissions of problems are often a smoke screen covering desires to receive attention."³⁴

The two important ingredients in utilizing the crisis to the best possible advantage is to recognize when the crisis occurs and to time the intervention so as to maximize the results. Stewart astutely notes the harsh reality that some alcoholics are convinced of their need for help only when the pain and suffering have been experienced for a protracted period.³⁵ However, this period of time may be curtailed if the 'bottom can be raised' through intervention. It is possible with persistence and patience that the family can be helped to hasten the process rather than hinder it by their actions. Hiding the problem is only helping it. Families need to learn the meaning of 'tough love' to use the parlance of professionals in the field. The

³³Blane, 52.

³⁴Blane, 58.

³⁵Stewart, 41.

'seemingly' loving thing to do is to care, nurture and sustain those in difficulty. However, if people in the social system as well as the helping professions can be guided to see that real love for the person is not in perpetuating the disease through support, but allowing the person to suffer the consequences of his/her drinking in order to bring them back to reality, then the possibility becomes more of a probability that the person will surrender.

There is a salutary dimension to suffering. As one recovering alcoholic said it, "I learned more through my pain than I ever did through pleasure." The pain of crisis must be of sufficient severity so that the alcoholic is touched not only on the conscious level which can compel compliance, but also on the unconscious level where ultimate surrender must occur. Stewart states that at the conscious level there is intellectual assent on the part of the alcoholic for the need for help, but on the unconscious level s/he feels s/he can handle it. He says,

So an alcoholic is often prepared to admit that he has a drinking problem. But, in the bottom of his heart, he defiantly believes he can handle his problem, and wishfully looks to the day he can drink like a gentleman.³⁶

The ambivalent nature of the alcoholic creates problems in his/her interpersonal relationships. The blame may be projected outward to others, but resides within himself/herself. The feelings are too intense to deal with and create a great sense of conflict. Thus the frightening nature of these hidden feelings foster the fear and encourage the person to harbor the hostility thus making the process of

³⁶Stewart, 90.

awareness that much more difficult. Blane says with regard to the professional caretaker concerning the alcoholic,

Since these processes are unspoken, unconscious, and accompanied by an almost impenetrable screen of passivity, they are difficult to bring to light so that caretaker and patient can examine them together. To help the dependent alcoholic to see that fear and hostility form a major, underlying aspect of his relations to you is a formidable task.³⁷

The task is tedious and frightfully frustrating, but as the miracle of transformation occurs, the wait is worth it and the frustration fades. A new future dawns bright with possibilities and laden with potential as another person is snatched from the jaws of death to live a life of sobriety with serenity.

2. Recognizing 'Surrender' as a Response to Crisis

When true surrender and acceptance occur, there is a qualitative difference in the attitude of the alcoholic. Johnson describes it in this manner,

There is a buoyancy that goes with the words, almost a lilt in the tone of voice. It is an expression of gratitude, deeply felt, toward the very people who, only weeks before, had been interfering do-gooders at best, and at the worst, ogres. Damaged self-esteem has obviously been repaired, and the earlier emotional alienation from others has been replaced by increased interest and intimacy. Emotional communication comes with new openness and ease.³⁸

The alcoholic has surrendered completely. S/he has come not only to the realization, but to the conviction that s/he is defeated and in despair gives up on the self with its willpower to rely on a Greater Power. Stewart frames it in this way,

³⁷Blane, 67.

³⁸Johnson, 81.

My will power has brought me to grief too often. I do not trust it any more. Will power is fear. It nearly destroyed me. Yes, now I have it! Will power, false pride, morbid fear - they all add up to death. But I want to live! So I must overcome fear, by wanting to live more than I want to die. I surrender to life. As I surrender to life, I surrender to God.³⁹

Stewart further says that, "Surrender means to work with and in life, positively and creatively."⁴⁰

Keller says that with genuine surrender the rationalization, defiance and projection 'miraculously' disappears. The grandiose plans vanish along with the plans to fix everything. The person begins to live the twenty-four hour program, becomes honest with himself/herself in regard to drinking and is willing to involve himself/herself in the total program of Alcoholics Anonymous.⁴¹ What has occurred is a radical reversal in the total lifestyle which includes conscious as well as unconscious transformation.

The seemingly irresolvable paradoxes which created the conflict are satisfactorily dealt with by the alcoholic. It is important to underscore that they have been 'satisfactorily' dealt with which means that there is never total resolution, for that would mean perfection, but now the alcoholic can live with himself/herself because there is no longer the need to be in control. There is a quelling of the conflict which comes through surrender. Johnson graphically says, "The civil war is over, and the personality has 'drawn together' again. He is open, self-accepting, warm, and willing to risk human

³⁹Stewart, 108.

⁴⁰Stewart, 111.

⁴¹Keller, 109-112.

relationships."⁴²

The process is not culminated with the euphoria accompanying surrender, the stance adopted with regard to facing the future is most critical.

When Surrender does come, it is signaled by an appropriate display of caution about the future. There is a gut-level realization that continued help during the period ahead is going to be necessary.⁴³

The peculiar thing about surrender is that victory is claimed in the midst of seeming defeat. What originally appeared as weakness, that is, the need for help; is now seen as a strength, the capacity to admit the need for help. The recovery process in that sense is paradoxical even as the illness itself is an experience in paradoxes. Roy Woodruff says,

The 'surrender reaction' is paradoxical in nature. Alcoholism is a battle that can be won only by giving up. It has to be more than a compromising self-negotiation. Unconditional surrender in the face of the reality of defeat will, alone, bring victory.⁴⁴

Egocentric self-love is transformed into self-esteem. Self-contempt becomes self-acceptance. The deceptive, denying disease disposed person becomes honest, humble and health oriented. These are dynamics which are not only psychologically important and observable, but theologically relevant and applicable. The spiritual dimension cannot be left out of the process. Johnson writes,

The intensity of the alcoholic's struggle to pass through this part of his spiritual and emotional recovery is difficult to describe,

⁴²Johnson, 82.

⁴³Johnson, 82.

⁴⁴Roy C. Woodruff, Alcoholism and Christian Experience (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1968) 56.

and we do not mean to exaggerate. But the importance of his doing it is almost beyond comprehension. Dynamically, this is accomplished by his movement from what was earlier defined as acceptance into gut-level surrender. It is the ultimate resolution of his characterological conflict. The central question, 'Who am I?' is answered. The guilt-ridden and shame-filled admission, 'I am who I am, God help me!' moves, moreover, to the more peaceful and hopeful 'God help me to be who I am!'. . . . As he surrenders, he sees that it is possible for him to risk being himself, and he moves consciously toward deepening his meaningful relationship with others because this will help him recover himself.⁴⁵

The alcoholic now has an identity and has life in proper perspective so that s/he can build upon that identity and grow to a more mature stance towards life. This perspective is made possible by the spiritual dimension of recovery. The power and resources which s/he could not find with himself/herself are found outside of the self in a Higher Power. In admitting self defeat and in acknowledging a Higher Power, the alcoholic has entered the surrender process which is central in recovery.⁴⁶ With the surrender process in motion and the alcoholic set on the road to maturity, s/he can more accurately determine what s/he wants to be. Woodruff states it in this manner,

Like many persons who suffer from a multitude of ills, both physical and mental, the alcoholic is a sick person. Like all persons, the alcoholic cannot redeem himself. He must surrender to a higher power outside of himself if he is to find himself and be restored to the 'land of the living.'⁴⁷

There is a mysterious quality about the surrender process even as there is a mysterious quality about the disease. The transformation process is really inexplicable. It is difficult to make an analogy or comparison.

⁴⁵Johnson, 103.

⁴⁶Johnson, 161.

⁴⁷Woodruff, 19.

Something like this experience of insight (likely unconscious) occurs before the surrender. He is beaten. He is on his own. All his supports are gone. He is powerless over alcohol. That he knows if nothing else. What is more vital, he feels it. The surrender occurs. It just happens. It cannot be scientifically charted from insight to occurrence. Its dynamics are a mystery. It may happen suddenly. It may come gradually. But happen it does, as one can see in the release of tension, the absence of defiance, the new presence of humility and composure.⁴⁸

The fact of the matter is that many of these women and men who recover and experience the process of transformation through surrender may not have been particularly religious in their orientation prior to this experience. Some came from religious backgrounds and rediscovered the rich resources of faith, others were openly antagonistic to religion. They now have what they term a 'spiritual' rather than 'religious' orientation towards life. Alcoholics Anonymous in relating the reality of the process confirms the fact that many members who come to acknowledge a Power greater than self find new meaning to life.⁴⁹

A new day has dawned with the bright rays of sobriety chasing the dark shadows of inebriety. The victory may be won, but the battle is not over for the alcoholic or his/her social system. The corner may have been turned, but the path ahead, like the path just abandoned, has its own unique pitfalls. These dynamics comprise perhaps the most important dimension of the process, namely the future of the alcoholic and his/her social system.

C. DYNAMICS OF CONTINUING RECOVERY

The change in individuals who surrender is radical. The social system

⁴⁸Stewart, 111 (Emphasis mine).

⁴⁹Alcoholics Anonymous, 50.

usually reacts with guarded optimism. A family which has maladjusted over the years to the runaway symptom of alcoholism as Tiebout terms it, now must readjust to a new person. The dynamics of the family are radically altered and a similar kind of transformation process must continue within the social system as with the alcoholic if that system is to survive. Suspicion, distrust and uncertainty need to be eradicated in order that the newly recovering person can sense not only the confidence which s/he has in himself/herself, but also the confidence of significant other people. The dynamics which throttled growth in the whole social system must be traded for new patterns which foster growth, maturity and a sense of peace to all in the system. There lurks in the wings of this continuing drama two possible threats to the new direction which the alcoholic and his/her social system have taken. These possibilities must be investigated to have a complete picture of what may develop for them and for the professional counselor or pastor who works with them.

1. The 'Dry Drunk' Syndrome

The one problem is related to Tiebout's conceptualization of submission or compliance as opposed to surrender. The unfolding saga of the alcoholic in what appears to be a conversion through surrender may be cloaked as a charade. It has been observed that this is not a matter of conscious intentionality nor necessarily deliberate deception. Compliance results inevitably in what is called in the common parlance of alcoholic treatment, the 'dry drunk.'

R.J. Solberg defines what is meant by the term. "'Dry-drunk' is a term describing the state of the alcoholic who is uncomfortable when he is not drinking. The dry-drunk syndrome is a group of symptoms that occur together and constitute an abnormality.⁵⁰ The character traits such as grandiose behavior, a judgmental outlook, tense impatience and immaturity which characterized the alcoholic when drinking reappear in the person. Solberg elaborates further,

The phrase 'dry-drunk' has two significant words for the alcoholic. 'Dry' simply refers to the fact that he abstains from drinking, whereas 'drunk' signifies a deeply pathological condition resulting from his use of alcohol in the past. Taken together these words suggest intoxication without alcohol. Since intoxication comes from the Greek word for 'poison,' dry-drunk implies a state of mind and mode of behavior that are poisonous to the alcoholic's well-being.⁵¹

The 'dry-drunk syndrome' in essence is the disease of alcoholism without the alcohol. In support of the thesis that the disease is based in conflict, Solberg notes that the alcoholic, now without the alcohol, still is involved in self-deception because there has not been a real surrender in Tiebout's sense of the word. There has been conscious acknowledgment of the disease, but not unconscious acceptance of it. The conflict is.

...a conflict between what he dimly perceives to be the truth about his feelings, impulses and wishes, and what his self-esteem allows him to accept as the truth. Since this contradiction is unbearable to his conscious mind, he drives it from his consciousness and resorts to various maneuvers to prevent it from coming to light.⁵²

S/he is forced to resort to the same tactics as prevailed when

⁵⁰R.J. Solberg, The Dry-Drunk Syndrome (Center City, MN: Hazelden, 1980) 3.

⁵¹Solberg, 3.

⁵²Solberg, 5.

drinking, namely rationalization, self-justification, projection, over-reaction to situations and denial. The submission or compliance has worked momentarily to avoid the discomfort of crisis, but has served only to exacerbate the relational problems which ensue.

Ford states,

... just stopping drinking is only part of the story. Some of the most miserable men I have known were men who had merely stopped drinking. The alcoholic's recovery, unless our whole conception of him is wrong, involves exchanging one way of life for another way of life.⁵³

Removal of the chemical substance does not automatically result in sobriety with serenity. Stewart characterizes the dry drunk as a sense of imprisonment. The person has submitted to the forces outside of himself/herself to refrain from drinking while internally experiencing a desire to drink and thinking s/he can control it. The pain the dry drunk causes himself/herself and others prompts one to conclude that being a wet drunk is preferable to being a dry drunk.⁵⁴ Martin is even more forceful in his description,

Dry drunks are vicious because there seems to be no way to break out of the tight circle of anger and self-pity that feeds them. You are locked inside feeding on your own hurts and inflating the problem even more. When others sympathize with you, it only adds justification to the fuel; if others criticize or make fun of your suffering, this further proves that the world is a nasty, mean, and brutish place, unworthy of your presence.

Dry drunks are no fun.⁵⁵

He likewise indicates that it is difficult to determine precisely when

⁵³Fred Ford, The Alcoholic (TS) (Newton Centre, MA: Andover Newton Department of Psychology, n.d.) 60.

⁵⁴Stewart, 319.

⁵⁵Greg Martin, Spiritus Contra Spiritum (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1977) 146.

the syndrome sets in and the insidious process begins, but it is very evident when it occurs. A primary symptom of the dry drunk is to sense incongruence and to blame others for the current state of affairs.⁵⁶

Johnson says that,

As this condition worsens, his mental gains erode away and he inevitably reverts to drinking 'to feel normal.' The great lesson of his past takes over, 'It moves me in the right direction and it works every time. Just one to get over the hump!' Rationalizations resume their old place in his life, and back he plunges. The characterological conflict continues to grow, and the drinking with it.⁵⁷

Keller notes that the 'dry drunk' may be evidenced in ways other than a lack of change in attitude.

In the initial phase of his sobriety, the alcoholic may live and sleep A.A. Consequently, the wife may see even less of him than when he was drinking. This is no cause for alarm unless it continues for a long period of time. It could then be an indication of a 'dry drunk' which is just being sober with no real surrender or basic change in attitude.⁵⁸

The reaction of the social system, usually the family, to the dry drunk is crucial for the professional counselor or pastor to observe. Solberg says, "Family reaction to his behavior may range from discouragement and confusion to depression, resentfulness or bitterness."⁵⁹ They too supposed that with the removal of alcohol things would be different and better, but with the dry drunk things become so bad that often they wish that s/he were drinking again. At least they knew how to deal with that as established in their patterns

⁵⁶Martin, 144.

⁵⁷Johnson, 61.

⁵⁸Keller, 138.

⁵⁹Solberg, 7.

of interaction over the years.

In a session with a spouse who was suffering the effects of the dry drunk she stated, "I really wish that he was drinking again. His drinking was never as bad as that ugly mood he is continually in now." The alcoholic suffering from the dry drunk becomes supersensitive to the whole social milieu. A kind of alcoholic paranoia develops and s/he feels that the whole world is watching and waiting for him/her to drink again.

The dry drunk syndrome is evident in the family or wider social system as it is in the person who is experiencing it. If the person who is alcoholic has been the identified patient as noted previously, then with the removal of the drinking problem, there is also the removal of the one upon whom all the blame was cast for everything which went wrong in the family system. In some situations, there is almost a need to have the person drink again so that the familiar patterns of scapegoating which were so convenient before can be put to work once again. This is a subtlety which is often overlooked in the recovery process. The assumption is that the family members would be ecstatic to have the one drinking recover, but the unconscious processes of the family system need to be uncovered to allow recovery to occur for them.

Swift and Williams note what the family gives up in the recovery process. They give up that particular lifestyle, emotional security, familiar roles, and the scapegoat as well as the strokes of sympathy they have garnered from those who observe what has occurred in the family. When sobriety is introduced into the system, there is a fear

of change, vindictive feelings of retribution and perhaps a power struggle occurs as the system attempts to accomodate the recovering person. This writer is in total agreement with Swift and Williams who state in their conclusion,

We feel that more attention should be paid to the needs of the family, before, during and after the process of rehabilitation for the addict. The addict is so specifically defined as 'the problem.' So much time, energy and money are invested in providing services for that one member of the family, that the rest of the family is prone to minimize the devastation they somehow managed to endure while living with the practicing addict. We feel that everyone is prone to ignore the terrible uncertainty, the bewilderment, they may face in learning to adjust to the addict's sobriety.⁶⁰

The Big Book in directing comments to the family states that there will be many changes in the household. Different and substitute roles have been assumed by various members of the family, especially the mother who has assumed the traditional role of the father in caring for the family. The mother assumed total responsibility for everyone and the father assumed more of the role of a sick child in the system.⁶¹

The important point is that the dry drunk syndrome as it has been termed is not a phenomenon exclusively to be identified with the alcoholic, but with the total family system. As a result of this phenomenon, the family itself can be a barrier to recovery even when the person himself/herself has genuinely surrendered. E.A. Verdery writes,

⁶⁰Harold A. Swift and Terence Williams, Recovery for the Whole Family (Center City, MN: Hazelden, 1975) 13.

⁶¹Alcoholics Anonymous, 130-131.

The families of many alcoholics continue to make decisions for them long after most others their age have come to rely upon their own judgment. Not infrequently do persons who have gained sobriety relate that even into adulthood do their parents, and/or parent figures, assume responsibility in telling them how to spend their money, whom to 'date,' and what time they are expected home.⁶²

This serves to substantiate the point that interruption and reversal of the established patterns is a most formidable task. Family members figuratively speaking can be on their own emotional dry drunk as a result of the inability to deal with the newly constituted family system which has come about as a result of recovery. In addition to the dry drunk syndrome, the second post-recovery threat is the 'slip.'

2. The 'Slip' Phenomenon

The word 'slip' refers to the ingestion of beverage alcohol again after a period of sobriety has been experienced. Keller says,

Unfortunately, it is possible for the alcoholic who has surrendered to cease being a surrendered person and have a slip at sometime. However, slips don't 'just happen' even though many an alcoholic likes to think they do. As Dr. Tiebout says, the omnipotent Ego has asserted itself again, and with this, dishonesty and pride go to work.⁶³

Stewart sees the slip as evidence of the fact that the surrender was not genuine. He asserts that the surrender was conditional and submissive. The person needs to unconditionally surrender as opposed to a grudging truce.⁶⁴ Strecker sees this as part of the unconscious process which operates in the alcoholic who must find an explanation

⁶²E.A. Verdery, "Pastoral Care of the Alcoholic's Family After Sobriety," Pastoral Psychology 13:123 (1962) 35.

⁶³Keller, 112.

⁶⁴Stewart, 326.

for his/her behavior in the relapse.

Question the abnormal drinker as to why he relapsed after a period of abstinence, and you find that he will automatically rationalize his reasons for relapsing....The rationalization will always include something in the environment as the reason for beginning to drink again, and without insight into his problem, it is difficult for him to see that the unconscious impulse for the narcotic effect of alcohol was, like the hypnotic suggestion, generated in his unconscious mind.⁶⁵

Keller suggests that the 'slip' comes about as a result of not practicing the principles and procedures which make for recovered living.

The daily inventory, attendance at A.A. and church, the way he handled resentments, and the involvement with his family that followed surrender had very likely disappeared or deteriorated before he started drinking.⁶⁶

Even though the slip is seemingly a step backward in the recovery process, it can be utilized for true recovery and greater growth in the person and the family. The person can come to see that s/he was submissive to the process rather than having truly surrendered.

Several people have been clinically treated for alcoholism a variety of times in their lives. Their repeated return is indicative of the fact that the surrender process has not taken place, but at least they have progressed to the point that they know where to turn when in trouble and that in itself is progress which often goes unnoticed. One alcoholic hospitalized for the third time said, "Now I understand what surrender means. I know I am done and defeated, I can't kid myself any longer into believing that I can handle it alone."

The slip for the family system is often a substantiation of the

⁶⁵Edward A. Strecker and Francis T. Chambers, Alcohol (New York: Macmillan, 1938) 96.

⁶⁶Keller, 112.

suspicion that recovery was 'too good to be true.' It can be viewed with the jaundiced eye of resentment and the bitter attitude that all is lost. Once again the professional counselor or pastor has an opportunity to work with the family system and their feelings. It is well to point out that there has been a period of sobriety which is progress and as with any disease, relapse can and does occur, but it need not be the end of all help and hope. E.A. Verdery says,

The reaction of some families is to despair of any hope for the alcoholic's genuine recovery, to express old fears, and to relive the past painful experiences. However, if the minister and the family do not panic because of the relapse, likely the drinking will be much more short-lived than in previous times when extensive efforts were made to force him to quit.⁶⁷

There is a way of turning a negative situation into a positive possibility as is suggested in the Big Book as a family member views this,

This experience (the slip) may come to you. Or you may already have had it several times. Should it happen again, regard it in a different light. Maybe it will prove a blessing! It may convince your husband he wants to stop drinking forever. And now you know that he can stop if he will! Time after time, this apparent calamity has been a boon to us, for it opened up a path which led to the discovery of God.⁶⁸

The dynamics of recovery realistically takes cognizance of the dry drunk syndrome and the slip as possibilities and as indicators that transformation has not penetrated to the depths of the individual's personhood. Perhaps the time was not right nor the person ready for the change. Patience is the queen of the virtues for all members of the social system who are involved in the recovery process.

⁶⁷Verdery, 36.

⁶⁸Alcoholics Anonymous, 116.

3. Sobriety with Serenity.

It is one of the theses of this dissertation as noted previously that sobriety without serenity is insipid. The dissonance of the disease needs to modulate into new experiences of harmony. "Surrender of the self with its old patterns of disharmony is the only thing that allows the formation of harmony between values and behavior."⁶⁹ As Stewart says, "The depth of his former fear becomes not the strength of his capacity to live deeply and well."⁷⁰ Vernon Johnson says, "Abstinence is not the only goal of therapy; the real purpose is the restoration of adequate ego strength to enable the victim once again to cope with life situations."⁷¹ To live a miserable existence as described with the dry drunk syndrome or to experience perpetual slips profits no one. There is much more to sobriety than the absence of alcohol. Strecker says,

Sobriety is an essential preliminary, but only a preliminary, to be contented, efficient life, and it is the contented, efficient life that you are in search of. When the inner personality, which you were so unsuccessfully trying to escape from in drink, is so changed that you no longer want to escape from it, you will be living effectively, rather than merely existing in a nervous and depressed state of mind. You will eventually achieve contentment if you will have patience and perseverance.⁷²

The fact of the matter is that recovery which hopes to enjoy the serenity requires discipline and work. Actions and attitudes need to

⁶⁹Woodruff, 75.

⁷⁰Stewart, 115.

⁷¹Johnson, 60.

⁷²Strecker and Chambers, 191.

be altered. The personal qualities and gifts which the person possesses which were abused during addiction can now be used constructively, for "...the tendencies which make him sensitive to addiction are the same tendencies which can make for a vigorous adventurous life."⁷³

Stewart refers to this process as disciplined pleasure. It involves a radical new lifestyle of discipline. It is not a discipline to be resisted because it represents further confinement, but rather is the key to unlocking life to be truly free.⁷⁴ Despite the insight, the surety of the surrender and the certainty of the conversion in thinking, patterns tend to persist and one which Johnson sees as most problematic is rigidity. "He will need help to deal with the rigidity in his life-style that developed during the progress of his illness."⁷⁵ This takes discipline to force oneself out of such patterns, but with patience it is not only a possibility but a probability.

In this disciplined effort there needs to be correlation of the doing with the thinking. "Somehow we have to bring out thinking and doing together. The plea for self-acceptance and self-knowledge falls flat unless we are prepared to do something about it."⁷⁶

One way of working at this discipline and new lifestyle is to

⁷³Stewart, 186.

⁷⁴Stewart, 273.

⁷⁵Johnson, 83.

⁷⁶Stewart, 119.

positively and constantly hold out before oneself a vision of what life can be like without alcohol. This positive orientation towards life is characterized by Stewart as 'adventurous sobriety.'⁷⁷

It is not only a matter of establishing positive goals, but having goals which are realistic in nature. "With an ongoing relationship, goals must be perceived in terms of a process that involves, in many cases, months and even years."⁷⁸ The problems and patterns characteristic of the alcoholic and his/her family did not arise overnight and one cannot reasonably expect to satisfactorily resolve them in a brief time. Once the chemical has been removed and the surrender process has occurred, then further counseling is not only advisable, but also admissable to the alcoholic. S/he has come to the realization that it can be a further incentive to growth.

Once an alcoholic has surrendered, he will be able to benefit from further counseling in regard to other problems, individual and marital. He will be open to becoming aware of his egocentricity, hostility, over-dependency, and failure to assume responsibility for his feelings. He will be open to the awareness that when he began to turn to alcohol, he ceased to grow emotionally and spiritually as a responsible person.⁷⁹

The surrender process, when genuine, brings a sense of serenity to the person as well as the family system if all are in the process of recovery. All will view the situation not as losing something, but as gaining. The dynamics of the individual and the family move outward and not inward, upward and not downward, forward and not backward.

⁷⁷Stewart, 107.

⁷⁸Keller, 114.

⁷⁹Keller, 118.

Stewart says of the alcoholic that, "He loses his fear of life and engages in it whole-heartedly, once the surrender is honest and complete."⁸⁰ The same applies to the family.

The surrendered life is a life lived in humility. The person and the family become as McMillan states it, teachable, supple, open, 'dying daily,' healthy and getting the self out of the way.

It is apparent that such a concept of humility could convey an annoying impression of flabbiness, meekness, and downright 'non-American' behavior. For a society and culture such as ours that has lauded the frontier spirit and has encouraged the view that there resides in each of us the strength and the power to become what we will if we but try hard enough, some of the traits listed above could sound like manifest nonsense. But closer scrutiny into these concepts should make it apparent that such an 'ego-reduction' process eventuates in health rather than illness, strength rather than weakness, in the addictive personality.⁸¹

One can easily see that the interlacing dispositions of society and the individuals who live in that society has a tremendous reciprocal impact. Humility as a disposition is the sine qua non for sobriety, yet the society in which the alcoholic lives has cultural patterns which mitigate against embracing such a disposition. Thus the alcoholic must be doubly conscious of his/her needs to maintain a humble attitude. Clinebell says,

Why must the surrendered alcoholic continue to exercise vigilance to avoid the loss of his humility? As I see it, it is because the underlying problem of infantile narcissism is not resolved, but rather walled off in the experience of surrender.⁸²

⁸⁰Stewart, 114.

⁸¹John J. McMillan, "Some Essentials in the Rehabilitation of the Addictive Personality," in Ruth Fox (ed.) Alcoholism (New York: Springer, 1967) 30.

⁸²Howard J. Clinebell, Jr., "The Agony of the Family of the Alcoholic," Pastoral Psychology 13:123 (1962) 60.

Whether it is termed 'infantile narcissism' in psychological terms or the persistence of false pride and self-deification in theological terms, the alcoholic as well as the members of the significant social system must be constantly on guard not to revert back to former ways, but maintain a posture of humility.

As has been indicated, the dynamics of what occurs with the alcoholic and his/her family or significant social network has familiar overtones for those acquainted with the dynamics of religious life. It is suggested that this dimension has not been taken seriously enough in the past or in the present for that matter. Dr. Harry Tiebout saw the necessity of this dimension even though it was not scientifically verifiable. He saw the mysterious quality and nature of the surrender process and the radical transformation which occurred as a result. Without this spiritual dimension or quality, sobriety held less than its optimum possibilities for the person and his/her family. Verdery notes in this regard,

A sense of spiritual fulfillment is a valuable asset to the alcoholic and his family after sobriety. Dr. Harry M. Tiebout attributes the success of many alcoholics in maintaining sobriety to their firm hold on religious certainties.⁸³

It has been the purpose of this chapter to elaborate and expand upon the writings of Dr. Harry A. Tiebout in relationship to recovery from alcoholism. The dynamics operative before, during and after the 'surrender' point have been considered in greater depth and detail. This chapter has provided a more comprehensive view of the transformation process.

⁸³Verdery, 36.

Tiebout's preoccupation was with the alcoholic and understandably so, but the transformation process must also occur in the family system and/or significant social contacts or the alcoholic lives in danger of reverting back to his/her former life.

The progression of the disease continues even after the alcoholic stops drinking so that to resume drinking is not to begin again in terms of the addiction process, but to find oneself in worse condition than before. It is not unlike the truism in the biblical witness that once one demon is cast out, the house must be kept clean lest seven others come in and occupy it and the state of that person is worse than before.

Even as Tiebout developed a psychotherapeutic paradigm for the understanding of the disease, so also he recognized the social paradigm of support necessary for maintaining sobriety, that is Alcoholics Anonymous. Blum and Blum state,

Tiebout (1961, 1944) states that to disregard A.A. because its practice does not follow accepted scientific procedures would be a short-sighted waste of clinical materials.⁸⁴

The dynamics of transformation are an integral part of this unique self-help group, as well as that of its companion group Al-Anon. It is to the program of recovery represented in these groups that attention is now directed.

⁸⁴Blum and Blum, 163.

PART THREE

ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS AND AL-ANON - SOCIAL SELF-HELP PARADIGMS
OF TRANSFORMATION AND RECOVERY

CHAPTER VI

TRANSFORMATION THROUGH THE TWELVE STEPS

A. INTRODUCTION TO THE PROGRAM

This paper affirms that alcoholism arises out of the social matrix of interactional conflict between the individual and the social environment. Since the problem does not evolve in isolation, it is not resolved apart from the social setting. Tiebout, whose theories were explicated in the last two chapters, acknowledged that he learned about the dynamics of recovery from the self-help group called Alcoholics Anonymous. The structure of the group and the systematic steps which the members were enjoined to follow provided the context for the conversion and transformation experience to occur. This group was created for and addressed itself to only the practicing alcoholic in the family. While providing a social paradigm for transformation and recovery for the alcoholic, it was not designed to provide the same opportunity for the family or significant other persons close to the alcoholic.

Fox and Lyon note that this concern did not go unnoticed by the members of Alcoholics Anonymous. They write,

As it happens, Alcoholics Anonymous quickly became aware of how serious a problem was posed by the alcoholic's family. The A.A. solution has been sound and pragmatic, even if it is not addressed to the wife's deeper psychological needs. Their solution has been to form A.A. auxiliaries, usually called Al-Anon Family Groups.¹

¹Ruth Fox and Peter Lyon (eds.) Alcoholism (New York: Random House, 1955) 182.

More recently, companion groups to Al-Anon have been formed. Alateen for teenagers and Alatot for pre-teens have been developed to deal with the specific problems which young people have in relationship to the practicing alcoholic and the effect which that has had on their self understanding and development.

The creation of these organizations is indicative of the fact that alcoholism is recognized as a social disease requiring a systemic approach. Furthermore, if a functional family unit is to be restored, it requires a radical reversal of lifestyle or transformation on the part of the whole system and not just the alcoholic himself/herself.

This chapter will concern itself with an analysis of the twelve step approach as it relates to the entire family system. The literature is replete with examples of the manner in which the steps serve as a methodology for recovery for the practicing alcoholic, but little has been written in applying this approach to the family system. This chapter will seek to creatively illustrate how that may be done.

These groups provide a vehicle whereby the transformation process can occur, but also provide the necessary social support group for maintaining a sustained sobriety for the alcoholic, strength for the family members and a sense of serenity for the entire family system.

The history and development of these self-help groups has been thoroughly covered in the literature.²

²Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age (New York: Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, 1979)

Howard J. Clinebell, Jr., Understanding and Counseling the Alcoholic (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1968) 79-127.

Al-Anon Faces Alcoholism (New York: Al-Anon Family Group, 1966)
Al-Anon and Al-Ateen Groups at Work (New York: Al-Anon Family Group, 1976)

Ernest Kurtz, Not God (Center City, MN: Hazelden, 1979)

For the members of Alcoholics Anonymous and Al-Anon, the heart of the program is living the twelve steps as established by the early members of the program. These steps are simple in terms of content, but difficult to execute for the recovering family system. The weight of evidence as exemplified in the thousands of family systems who have and are experiencing the transformation process, indicates that it is an extremely powerful and effective approach in dealing with alcoholism. The wisdom of the sequential ordering of the steps, both from a theological as well as a psychological perspective, becomes apparent as an analysis is made.

B. THE CONTENT AND ANALYSIS OF THE TWELVE STEP PROGRAM

Step One: We admitted we were powerless over alcohol - that our lives had become unmanageable.

The persistence and pervasiveness of denial as a factor accompanying alcoholism has already been discussed. Before transformation can become a possibility, an awareness for the need of such a phenomenon needs to be acknowledged. The admission of powerlessness is difficult particularly for the alcoholic who has the grandiose and omnipotent need and notion that s/he is 'all powerful.'

Who cares to admit complete defeat? Practically no one, of course. Every natural instinct cries out against the idea of personal powerlessness. It is truly awful to admit that, glass in hand, we have warped our minds into such an obsession for destructive drinking that only an act of Providence can remove it from us.³

³Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions (New York: Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, 1964) 21.

The first step addresses the conflict which is at the heart of the problem. The vision of oneself ideally as all powerful and the reality of being powerless is a conflict which is an intolerable paradox which prompts the person to drink even more. People invariably say, "I can handle it," or perhaps state that their consumption is more than it should be and come into Alcoholics Anonymous with the mistaken idea that the group will teach him/her how to 'control' their drinking. The alcoholic soon learns that the group's purpose is not an exercise in training the will to overcome the addiction, but rather to admit that they are powerless over alcohol. Keller says,

The first step is surrender to the reality of powerlessness over alcohol and of life being unmanageable. There is no better word to describe the nature of alcoholism and the dilemma of the alcoholic than the word 'powerlessness.' In this sense it is a powerful word. The alcoholic has to quit fighting because he is already defeated. As long as he continues to fight this reality, either in trying to quit or control his drinking, or simply by the slightest unconscious reservation about the reality of actual powerlessness, he continues to go down into defeat.⁴

The evidence of the powerlessness over the beverage is noted in the 'unmanageability' of one's life. The strong urge and compulsion to drink is of such a nature that all of the person's life gravitates about alcohol. The thought of consuming alcohol occupies the person's conscious mind as well as controlling the unconscious processes. Addiction is an all consuming passion which is broken only by the admission of the addicted of his/her powerlessness. The capacity to come to the point of admission is indicative of a power operative in the person's life which A.A. members attribute to God. The case history of Mr. Kemp, as cited by C. Roy Woodruff, is typical of many

⁴John Keller, Ministering to Alcoholics (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1966) 42.

alcoholics and is quoted as an illustrative example of the meaning of powerlessness in the experience of an alcoholic.

Suddenly one morning, after being drunk the night before, Mr. Kemp got up and told his wife he had taken his last drink. He confessed his powerlessness over alcohol and said he would never take a drink again. This act of surrender took place spontaneously and almost unconsciously. Mr Kemp says he was not sure what made him say it, but he knew he meant it. He says that it was not himself speaking at all, but God speaking through him. Alone, he would not have been able to surrender and really mean it.⁵

It is not only the practicing alcoholic who must come to the realization of powerlessness and unmanageability, his/her social system must also admit their powerlessness over alcohol and the alcoholic. These significant people around the alcoholic have been trying desperately using desperate measures to get the person to stop drinking. Over the span of time when the alcoholic has been drinking, which usually is years, the alcoholism engulfs the entire family. With an almost imperceptible insidiousness, the family system becomes enslaved to the alcoholism to the point that their lives too are governed by the drinking as they react and over-react to what is transpiring with the practicing alcoholic. Anger, frustration, hatred and resentment grow as the family system perceives itself as being victimized by the practicing alcoholic and the innocent recipient of the alcoholic's wrath.

Mere suggestion of the need for help often brings a defensive reaction on the part of the alcoholic and the family system. They have become locked into their lifestyle disorder. The admission of

⁵C. Roy Woodruff, Alcoholism and Christian Experience (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1968) 40-41.

powerlessness appears to be tantamount to resignation and despair rather than the key which unlocks the chains of addiction and provides the possibility of transformation and new life.

The most effective mechanism which can interrupt and intervene in the family system is pain. The pain of the alcoholism needs to be felt in all of its excruciating fullness before an admission of powerlessness and unmanageability comes forth. One or more of the family members must come to the conclusion that the satiation point has been reached in terms of tolerating the pain. This may be the practicing alcoholic or it can be any member or members of the family. The 'hitting bottom' phenomenon whether by natural evolution of the alcoholism or by intervention through precipitation of a crisis often serves as the turning point which enables someone in the system to admit powerlessness over the alcohol and unmanageability of life. What Tiebout writes concerning this point for the practicing alcoholic could as accurately be said for other members of the family as well.

He begins to despair, to see nothing but hopelessness ahead with pain and misery his lot for the rest of his life. He is shaken, desperate, sunk in depression. He has hit a low, he has hit bottom. At that point, he wants help.⁶

My pastoral experience has been that it is usually a member of the family, often the spouse, who ultimately despairs and seeks help. Powerlessness is equated with futility and failure rather than as the first positive step towards health. Only after becoming acquainted with and living out the steps to recovery does the person become aware

⁶Harry M. Tiebout, "Alcoholics Anonymous, An Experiment of Nature," Quarterly Journal of Studies on Alcoholism 22 (1961) 55.

that the admission of powerlessness was a powerful step to initiating recovery for him/her.

In families where the alcoholic takes the first step in the A.A. program, the effect is felt throughout the family system which often lures other family members to join the same process through participation in the parallel program of Al-Anon. Research indicates that the converse is also true. Where members of the alcoholic's family have taken the initiative and joined Al-Anon, their change in lifestyle often precipitates a change in the alcoholic as well.⁷

It is the contention of this paper that if the family is to function in a healthful and growth producing manner through the process of transformation as suggested by these steps, then all need to participate. The commonality of experience in the process forms a positive axis upon which the family wheel turns rather than having the alcohol be the hub of attention which keeps the wheel spinning aimlessly.

It is important to note that the alcoholic can experience transformation without the family and the family can experience transformation without the alcoholic as the process of the program is experienced by the respective participants. However, as a social paradigm of recovery for the whole family, it is imperative that all family members participate and adhere to the program. Failure to do so often results in the breakdown of the marriage and/or the family system. Evidence to support this contention is noted in the increase

⁷Al-Anon Faces Alcoholism, 33-37.

of divorce and family break up subsequent to treatment or membership in a self-help program if the family unit is not involved. Transformation involves change and change precipitates the operation of new dynamics in the system. The perpetuation of old patterns of behavior and lifestyle inevitably comes into conflict with new patterns thus creating tension and friction resulting in fragmentation of the family.

Stewart says,

In the first step of the programme you declare you are powerless over alcohol and your life is unmanageable. You do this because you are tired of being sick and miserable, and you give up all hope of being able to run your life, by yourself. You want to be free of your misery. Having made this surrender, this admission of utter failure to control your behavior alone, the only reasonable next step is to look for help outside yourself.⁸

As Stewart states in the last sentence, this is the essence of Step Two once the reality of Step One has been acknowledged and accepted by the family or significant other social system.

Step Two: Came to believe that a power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.

The alcoholic is faced with the most penetrating of existential questions in relationship to himself/herself. That is the question concerning God. The Big Book says,

When we became alcoholics, crushed by a self-imposed crisis we could not postpone or evade, we had to fearlessly face the proposition that either God is everything or else He is nothing. God either is, or He isn't. What was our choice to be?⁹

⁸David A. Stewart, Thirst for Freedom (Toronto: Musson, 1960) 325.

⁹Alcoholics Anonymous (New York: Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, 1955) 53.

The second step in the transformation process of recovery simply, but effectively emphasizes the reality of a Power greater than self. The authors of the book judiciously avoided the word 'God' at this juncture so as not to create a red flag reaction on the part of some people. The issue of resistance to religion and God-talk has already been noted and that resistance persists tenaciously in the alcoholic and his/her family. In his story of transformation, Bill Wilson, co-founder of Alcoholics Anonymous states,

It was only a matter of being willing to believe in a Power greater than myself. Nothing more was required of me to make my beginning. I saw that growth could start from that point....Thus was I convinced that God is concerned with us humans when we want Him enough. At long last I saw, I felt, I believed. Scales of pride and prejudice fell from my eyes. A new world came into view.¹⁰

The pride and prejudice against 'coming to believe' that there is a Power who can invade the confusion and chaos of the alcoholic world and restore sanity and health is intense. The book, Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions¹¹ notes a number of reactions to Step Two. There may be belligerence or defiance, indifference, skepticism in those who once had faith or tried it and found it wanting. Prejudice, self-sufficiency, intellectualism and the charge of hypocrisy for those who are involved in organized religion are all powerful mitigating factors against appropriating Step Two. The multiplicity of defiant reasons is as diversified as there are people.

Ultimately the alcoholic comes to see that transformation is not a program of self-improvement, but that one needs to believe in a power

¹⁰Alcoholics Anonymous, 12.

¹¹Twelve Steps, 28-34 .

greater than self. Stated positively, s/he comes to a state of reliance and not defiance; alliance rather than mere compliance with the program. As has been noted in chapter four, compliance is more subtle and deadly than defiance. The outward signs do not mesh with the inward signals and "...to clergymen, doctors, friends and families, the alcoholic who means well and tries hard is a heartbreaking riddle."¹² Those who have been through the sequence are aware that the real issue,

...has to do with the quality of faith rather than its quantity. This has been our blind spot. We supposed we had humility when really we hadn't. We supposed we had been serious about religious practices when, upon honest appraisal, we found we had been only superficial. Or, going to the other extreme, we had wallowed in emotionalism and had mistaken it for true religious feeling. In both cases, we had been asking something for nothing. The fact was we really hadn't cleaned house so that the grace of God could enter us and expel the obsession.¹³

A parallel process must prevail in the family or social system of the alcoholic as well if transformation via this particular process is going to occur. The personal resources of each person in the network diminish and finally evaporate as they do battle with the dynamics of the disease. Reliance upon self or others in the system simply is not adequate for the situation. Whether the practicing alcoholic continues to drink or not, other members of the family can come to realize that there is a Power greater than self which can restore them to sanity. The insanity of the family member parallels and often exceeds that of the practicing alcoholic. To tolerate often both verbal and physical abuse, hatred and heartbreak, disruption and

¹²Twelve Steps, 32.

¹³Twelve Steps, 32-33.

devastation over an extended period of time is evidence that the need for alliance with a reliance on a Power greater than self is in order to restore one to sanity.

The insanity of the alcoholic is to continue to pursue a lifestyle which leads to a dead end as s/he at best can make only token efforts by willpower to break the addiction. The insanity of the social system is to remain neurotically tied to an existence of misery and madness. The members of the family often suffer in silence or react with rage and resentment as they attempt to adjust, readjust and ultimately maladjust to the situation. The entire social system needs to come to an awareness of the insanity of their lifestyle and come to believe that there is a benevolent Power which can overcome the malevolent power of addiction.

Keller summarizes Step Two and transition to Step Three in this manner,

Having come to believe, which denotes a process experience, that God could restore him to sanity, the alcoholic must next make a decision to turn his will over to the care of God as he understands him. Theologically, this is part of the content and evidence of faith, but A.A. spells it out in a separate step. Surrender and faith involve movement that is commitment of life to God. And in this step (two) we see that such movement is not just a matter of determination but a matter of willingness. Here, too, we begin to see the necessity for the alcoholic to face up to the fact that he is a responsible person who must assume responsibility for his problem and for doing what he needs to do in order to recover.¹⁴

Keeping to the interactionist perspective, it would have been well for Keller to add that the family or significant social system of the alcoholic must likewise be willing and open to change and to assume responsibility for their own attitudes, reactions and behavior. As the

¹⁴Keller, 54.

system acknowledges the insanity of its existing practice and commends itself to a Power which can restore sanity and order where insanity and chaos prevailed, the stage for transformation has been established.

Step Three: Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understand Him.

Whereas Steps One and Two engaged the alcoholic and the family in reflection upon the situation and the need for change, Step Three is the beginning of action and the implementation of that change. It is impossible to elevate one of the steps in this process above others as being more important, for it requires the working of all of the steps for all of the people involved before sobriety with serenity can be accomplished. From the perspective of this dissertation which focuses on the dynamics of transformation through surrender or 'conversion' as Tiebout termed it, Step Three is the 'turning point' in the process.

The focus is shifted from the individual and his/her omnipotent delusions and needs to the transforming power of the truly Omnipotent One who can effect the necessary change. The disposition of the alcoholic is graphically described in this manner,

The idea is that the world ought to conform to our way of thinking and everything would be alright. When that does not happen, we become indignant and angry...we run the universe and the universe isn't running us, but all the time we are running away from ourselves. When it doesn't go our way we feel justified in being critical.¹⁵

The egocentricity, selfishness and sense of omnipotence must be eradicated. Theologically this is way of saying that the 'old Adam' must be drowned daily to borrow a phrase from Martin Luther. The

¹⁵Alcoholics Anonymous, 61.

person humbly confesses that,

God makes that possible. And there often seems no way of entirely getting rid of self without His aid....Neither could we reduce our self-centeredness much by wishing or trying on our own power. We had to have God's help.¹⁶

This step is an attempt at establishing 'basic trust' as Erik Erikson speaks of it. Trust is essentially faith in the benevolence of God as understood by the person. A 'leap of faith' in the Kierkegaardian sense is made as the person 'surrenders' himself/herself along with their will to the care of God. Bill Wilson offers this from his own story,

There (at the hospital) I humbly offered myself to God, as I then understood Him, to do with me as He would. I placed myself unreservedly under His care and direction. I admitted for the first time that of myself I was nothing; that without Him I was lost. I ruthlessly faced my sins and became willing to have a new-found Friend take them away, root and branch. I have not had a drink since.¹⁷

It is not an easy process to radically reverse one's thinking and lifestyle. Patterns of behavior become deeply ingrained and difficult to eradicate. The humble offering of oneself to God as described by Wilson constituted the act of surrender. The aftermath of that experience he describes in this manner,

There was a sense of victory, followed by such a peace and serenity as I had never known. There was utter confidence. I felt lifted up, as though the great clean wind of a mountain top blew through and through. God comes to most men gradually, but His impact on me was sudden and profound.¹⁸

Resistance to the act of surrender appears to be lodged in the 'fear' of yielding up the semblance of control from a life which is out

¹⁶Alcoholics Anonymous, 62.

¹⁷Alcoholics Anonymous, 13.

¹⁸Alcoholics Anonymous, 14.

of control. For many the process appears to be that of giving up, rather than giving in; of losing self-security rather than gaining divine guidance. Initially it appears as another kind of dependent relationship which violates the need for independence. There is the threat of becoming a non-entity, encumbered by another authoritarian system. But the quality of dependence upon God is radically different from the dependency which characterizes neurotic personalities. The self-help groups affirm the vital necessity of distinguishing between the two. Dependence upon God does not result in becoming a non-entity.

This is the process which instinct and logic always seek to bolster egotism, and so frustrate spiritual development. The trouble is that this kind of thinking takes no real account of the facts. And the facts seem to be these: The more we become willing to depend upon a Higher Power, the more independent we actually are. Therefore dependence, as A.A. practices it, is really a means of gaining true independence of the spirit.¹⁹

Surrender results in release and relief from the burdensome weight of believing one is responsible for the entire world. It requires the person to constantly remind himself/herself of that reality.

We constantly remind ourselves we are no longer running the show, humbly saying to ourselves many times each day, 'Thy will be done.' We are then in much less danger of excitement, fear, anger, worry, self-pity, or foolish decisions. We become much more efficient. We do not tire so easily, for we are not burning up energy foolishly as we did when we were trying to arrange life to suit ourselves.²⁰

The whole foundation of the alcoholic's existence has been altered. Trust rather than fear assumes a central role. Trust is lodged in an infinite God rather than finite self. It is affirmed that

¹⁹Twelve Steps, 37.

²⁰Alcoholics Anonymous, 87-88

God can enable the person to even meet calamity with serenity.²¹

This is not to suggest that the struggle is over or that the person will not slip back into former ways of thinking and acting. A constant vigil is imperative in order that growth and strength for this new lifestyle can occur. A judgment with regard to the authenticity and validity of the surrender experience can be determined by the person's disposition towards others after the Third Step. Keller notes,

...We do see the phenomenon of an alcoholic who finds that his unhealthy Ego needs are being met in being an alcoholic in A.A., and with sufficient approbation he manages to stay sober without any real surrender and inner change.²²

The members of the fellowship seem to be intuitively aware of those members who display health without humility, a quantity of sobriety without the quality of serenity.

Equally crucial in the transformation process is the need for the family to turn their wills and lives over to the care of God. Since the alcoholic is usually the 'identified patient,' to use a term popularized by Virginia Satir, the family's thought processes run parallel to that of the alcoholic. The alcoholic believes that all would be well if the world, including his/her family, would conform to his/her wishes. The family, who sees itself victimized by the alcoholic, believes that all would be well if the alcoholic would stop drinking. They fail to see their complicity in the intrafamilial dynamics which support the pathogenic system. Select members of the family will attempt to direct and control the ship of destiny for the

²¹Alcoholics Anonymous, 68.

²²Keller, 60.

entire family including the alcoholic thus playing the role of God in the family system.

In Al-Anon, members of the family learn in Step Three not only to turn their own wills and lives over to the care of God, but to in effect release the practicing alcoholic as well. It usually comes as a startling revelation that they have been manipulating and maneuvering the alcoholic and one another. They have attempted to 'control' the alcoholic's drinking, 'cover' for his/her behavior, 'coerce' the alcoholic into stopping by hiding or disposing of the alcohol. Members of the family engage in this kind of activity with the best of intentions, but fail to see that such behavior not only exacerbates the problem, but is also an attempt to play God with the life of another human being. Family members develop some of the same characteristics which they find so odious in the alcoholic. Surrender is imperative for them as well. One spouse stated it most insightfully when she said, "When I looked at myself, I saw that I was developing a sense of superiority and arrogance. I thought of him as less than a person who needed someone to control his life. Now I see that I have no control over his life nor should I have, I must surrender him as well as myself to God."

The book, Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions which is used extensively by A.A. and Al-Anon explicates the essence of the Third Step in this way,

It is when we try to make our will conform with God's that we begin to use it rightly. To all of us, this was a most wonderful revelation. Our whole trouble had been the misuse of will power. We had tried to bombard our problems with it instead of attempting to bring it into agreement with God's intention for us. To make

this increasingly possible is the purpose of A.A.'s Twelve Steps and Step Three opens the door.²³

The surrender process for the alcoholic and family is the primary ingredient in recovery. It prepares them for the ensuing steps which are designed to aid them in executing the implications of the transformation process in their lives. The surrender process experienced in relationship to alcoholism then becomes a model for dealing with other exigencies in life as well. Alcoholism as manifested in the drinking is but one problem in a multiplicity of problems in living which the whole social system must contend with daily. The dynamic of surrender becomes the paradigm for living comfortably and serenely despite adverse circumstances of any nature which emerge in the life of the family.

The individual and corporate lives of the group serve as living epistles of the program's effectiveness. The alcoholic is not told that God will remove his problem. Rather, recovering alcoholics tell him that they have come to believe that God gives the alcoholic strength to stay sober one day at a time. After surrendering to his powerlessness and committing his life to the care of God, as he understands him, each day, the alcoholic takes a searching and fearless moral inventory of himself.²⁴

Keller's statement and summation provides a natural transition to Step Four of the program.

Step Four: Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.

Step Four for most alcoholics and family members is a most painful and threatening step which requires brutal honesty. It asks

²³Twelve Steps, 42.

²⁴Keller, 2.

the persons involved to determine and declare with great specificity the moral structure of their lives. This is a self inventory, not that of another. Humility was the sine qua non of Step Three in the surrender dynamic, honesty is the prerequisite in Step Four to insure credibility and integrity. It requires great courage to honestly articulate in concrete fashion one's life history in relationship to the world. For people whose lives have been dominated by dishonesty and fear the task seems impossible. Often times they must revert back to the prior three steps in order to find courage to do Step Four. For the alcoholic, the prospect of Step Four is described thus,

We have drunk to drown feelings of fear, frustration and depression. We have drunk to escape the guilt of passions, and then have drunk again to make more passions possible. We have drunk for vainglory - that we might the more enjoy foolish dreams of pomp and power. This perverse soul sickness is not pleasant to look up. Instincts on the rampage balk at investigation. The minute we make a serious attempt to probe them, we are liable to suffer severe reactions.²⁵

This step is an attempt at honest confrontation with the fearful realities of one's total character and not only a rehearsal of alcoholic behavior.²⁶

Bill Wilson in his inimitable way describes the feelings he experienced in doing the fourth step,

Almost none of us liked the self-searching, the leveling of our pride, the confession of shortcomings which the process requires for its successful consummation. But we saw that it really worked in others, and we had come to believe in the hopelessness and futility of life as we had been living it. When, therefore, we were approached by those in whom the problem had been solved, there was nothing left for us but to pick up the simple kit of spiritual tools laid at our feet. We have found much of heaven and we have been

²⁵Twelve Steps, 46.

²⁶Keller, 55.

rocketed into a fourth dimension of which we had not even dreamed.²⁷

The liberating potential of this step has untold theological as well as therapeutic implications. Whereas the person previously had found it easier to detect and attempt to extract the mote in the eye of another, s/he now has to come to terms responsibly with the logs in his/her own eyes to use a biblical analogy.

This step meets with a great amount of resistance on the part of those working the program. The nature of the resistance takes on the character of the person s/he views himself/herself.

Some react with a sense of terror because the inventory is so revealing of their personal shortcomings and failures. This exacerbates in these people the sense of low self esteem and they believe themselves to be hopeless and beyond help. This type of personality is representative of what Karen Horney calls the 'self effacing' person. In actuality it is pride in reverse in the sense that the person believes his/her faults and actions so heinous as to be unforgiveable. In actuality they are dictating to God what God can and cannot forgive and accept.

The second reaction is that of falsifying and rationalizing the past to minimize the defects and in effect asserting that a moral inventory is not necessary because of the stellar qualities of character apart from alcohol. This stance is articulated in this manner,

We will be offended at A.A.'s (or Al-Anon's) suggested inventory.

²⁷Alcoholics Anonymous, 25.

No doubt we shall point with pride to the good lives we thought we led before the bottle cut us down. We shall claim that our serious character defects, if we think we have any at all, have been caused chiefly by excessive drinking.²⁸

Both reactions are seen as attempts at dealing with the fear of exposure. Painful exposure is necessary in order to deal constructively with the fundamental attitude of resentment which enslaves the alcoholic. The Big Book states,

Resentment is the 'number one' offender. It destroys more alcoholics than anything else. From it stems all forms of spiritual disease, for we have been spiritually sick. When the spiritual malady is overcome, we straighten out mentally and physically.²⁹

The articulation of resentment as manifested in a multiplicity of ways in relationship to others is provided for by the Fourth Step inventory. Resentment is the result of the basic conflicts which the alcoholic has as noted in the third chapter. Healing and growth occur to the extent that the resentment is honestly dealt with and worked through in the inventory.

The Fourth Step positively begins the process of freeing the person from his/her guilt which has plagued them in the past. Long kept secrets are now expressed, pent up hostilities are explored and the egocentric lifestyle exposed. With the pain of the honest inventory comes also the healing balm of having stated openly the past. In so doing the ghosts of the past lose their power as the spectre of guilt which has haunted the person no longer lingers with him/her.

This step also provides for the person being enabled to accept

²⁸Twelve Steps, 46.

²⁹Alcoholics Anonymous, 64.

* personal responsibility for his/her life. Stated succinctly, "We saw our faults and we listed them. We placed them before us in black and white. We admitted our wrongs honestly and were willing to set these matters straight."³⁰ A new flow of strength and self confidence comes from facing oneself squarely and accepting responsibility. The energy expended in defensive denial, arrogance and anger as well as projection and blaming can now be utilized for positive growth. One recovering alcoholic stated it in this way, "I no longer have the need to always be right. I can accept my failures and mistakes knowing my life isn't coming to an end." By accepting personal responsibility, the person begins to systematically eliminate strife while more fully embracing new life.

From a systemic perspective it is judicious that Step Four be exercised and practiced by members of the family as well. This step is a way of impressing upon all of the members of the family their personal responsibility for their actions and feelings as well. It enables the family system to see its complicity in the dynamics of the disease as they take moral inventory of their actions and attitudes.

Resentment, hostility, hatred, unresolved anger, blaming and projection are but a few of the dynamics which the family members experience. It is imperative to repeatedly reiterate the necessity for assuming personal responsibility for one's own life. Frustration and failure on the part of family members was usually blamed on the alcoholic. They engaged also in the game of, 'if it weren't for you!' Family members usually see their actions and attitudes as justifiable

³⁰Alcoholics Anonymous, 67.

given the circumstances in which they live. However, they need to be confronted with their scapegoating games and become more fully aware of the manner in which they have allowed themselves to participate in and use the alcoholism to shun personal responsibility. The Fourth Step, because it is a personal inventory which precludes projecting responsibility to another person, aids the family member in becoming honest about his/her own failures.

Only the person himself/herself knows to what extent they have been honest in their inventory step. Usually the person is as honest as s/he is capable at that juncture in the journey. For this reason many persons in the A.A. and Al-Anon tradition do a Fourth Step periodically. As self-awareness and growth occur, there is a greater sensitivity and a growing awareness of concerns which were forgotten, conveniently overlooked or issues which the person could not face the first time the step was taken. If the Fourth and the Fifth Steps do not provide the necessary freedom and release, it is because the person was either not completely honest or sincere in his/her efforts. The Big Book states,

They took inventory all right, but hung on to some of the worst items in stock. They only thought they had lost their egoism and fear; they only thought they had humbled themselves. But they had not learned enough of humility, fearlessness and honesty, in the sense we find it necessary, until they told someone else all their life story.³¹

The Fourth Step is a painful step, but the pain is necessary for the restoration of healing and health. Even as the medical patient needs to endure the pain of lancing the cyst so that the infectious

³¹Alcoholics Anonymous, 73 (Emphasis mine).

material can be drained; so the persons involved in the alcoholic family experience the pain which comes from lancing the psychological cysts whose venomous content has poisoned the whole family system. This procedure spells relief and freedom as healing and health spring from this process. Step Five now adds a new dimension to the process.

Step Five: Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.

St. Augustine once stated that confession is good for the soul. The therapeutic value of Step Four is maximized in Step Five as the acid test of his/her honesty. The admission of one's defects of character to God who is an intangible reality becomes concretized in sharing these openly and honestly with another human being. It requires courage, but above all honesty and the willingness to risk exposure of oneself to another human being. It is precisely in the act of exposure or confession that a significant step towards trust in another human being as well as oneself is accomplished. The fact that alcoholics and/or their family members are encouraged to seek out a clergyperson for the Fifth Step is a critical dimension of pastoral care which will be addressed in the last part.

The Fifth Step allows the person in the context of a safe environment to begin to probe the conflicts outlined in chapter three. S/he begins the process of resolution through honest self-confrontation. This is a vital dimension of the process whereby the individual can deal openly and honestly with the conflict between

his/her values and behavior as outlined by Johnson.³²

Another function of this step is to alleviate the sense of isolation noted in Part One which accompanies the alcoholic and his/her family. Reaching out and revealing is an act of trust which also opens the lines of communication with another person. It can be an I-Thou encounter in which for the first time an in-depth dialogical relationship can occur within the context of caring acceptance. In my pastoral experience with those taking the Fifth Step, it is often physically observable to see the mantle and burden of guilt, grief and isolation fall from the person as s/he shares his/her story. An attentive ear, an accepting attitude and a sharing of common humanity bursts the floodgates of the past and relief and release are found in the vast outpouring of the very depths of that person's being.

The stories of past behavior and problems are shared in the social setting of the A.A. or Al-Anon meeting. Nonetheless, the Fifth Step is most important, for even though the person is not alone in the social arena,

...we still suffered many of the old pangs of anxious apartness. Until we had talked with complete candor of our conflicts, and had listened to someone else do the same things, we still didn't belong. Step Five was the answer. It was the beginning of true kinship with man and God.³³

Stated theologically, the overcoming of isolation through confession is the path to reconciliation through forgiveness. The articulation of one's shortcomings and defects mysteriously and powerfully opens the door to renewal. The dynamics of transformation

³²Vernon Johnson, I'll Quit Tomorrow (New York: Harper & Row, 1973) 74-75.

³³Twelve Steps, 58-59.

are operative as the person is liberated from the bondage of pride and the burden of guilt. Metaphorically the transformation is graphically and succinctly described by the psalmist in Psalm 32:3-5.

When I declared not my sin, my body wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me; my strength was dried up as by the heat of summer. I acknowledged my sin to thee, and I did not hide my iniquity; I said, 'I will confess my transgressions to the Lord'; then thou didst forgive the guilt of my sin.

Further theological implications of this process will be delineated in chapter ten. The impact of Step Five is thus noted,

Our moral inventory had persuaded us that all-around forgiveness was desirable, but it was only when we resolutely tackled Step Five that we inwardly knew we'd be able to receive forgiveness and give it too.³⁴

It is a humbling experience to parade in front of another human being the painful remembrances of the past, but the fruit of humility is sobriety with serenity. There is a great sense of relief which comes from pouring out pent up emotions. The combination of honesty and humility which results in serenity eases the pain and supplants it with tranquility.³⁵

This is the point at which many who were previously avowedly agnostic experience through the dialogical relationship the incarnate reality of God's love who addresses them and accepts them as they are. Liberation and transformation become simultaneously experienced in this encounter. A new awareness and sense of relationship with God is experienced. "We may have had certain spiritual beliefs, but now we begin to have spiritual experience."³⁶

³⁴Twelve Steps, 59.

³⁵Twelve Steps, 63.

³⁶Alcoholics Anonymous, 75.

The selection of someone trustworthy who can keep confidences is of utmost importance. Family members are not recommended for this step, but if a family member is used, the person is enjoined not to disclose information which will cause hurt to that person. The cleansing dimension of confession is not to be at a family member's expense.³⁷

This concern for a family member is indicative of the fact that the person in the recovery process is beginning to emerge from the world of egocentricity. S/he is expanding the arena of concern to other people, beginning with the members of the family. Superficially, this consideration may appear to be an inconsequential deference to family feelings, but in the recovery process it may be the first glimmer of light which seeps through the narcissistic shell in which the person has been encapsulated.

In keeping with the social perspective and family dimension of the disease, it is recommended that family members likewise experience the same freeing power which accompanies Step Five. Through the years of excessive drinking, family members become deeply entrenched in their own anger, hatred and resentment. Relief and release from such paralyzing emotions and attitudes is possible through the practice of Step Five. If honest and caring relationships within the family framework are to be given a chance following the alcoholic's recovery, the whole family system requires attention.

Some spouses of alcoholics engage in extra-marital affairs as a

³⁷Alcoholics Anonymous, 74.

way of coping with the frustrations while married to a practicing alcoholic. Relationships are damaged and responsibilities shunned by family members who have exonerated themselves using the practicing alcoholic as an excuse. The Fifth Step compels them to come to terms with their rationalizations. If Step Three was pivotal in initiating the transformation process for the alcoholic and his/her family, Step Five is pivotal as an action step in implementing the change process.

Step Six: Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.

Abstinence from alcohol does not automatically eliminate all problems of living. Veteran members of A.A. are fond of saying that beverage alcohol became the addictive coping mechanism for dealing with reality. In sobriety the substance is eliminated, but the relational problems of life still remain. As God can eliminate the craving for alcohol, so God can eliminate other defects of character which interrupt the process of healthy growthful living. One recovering alcoholic amusingly stated, "I became ready to allow God to remove my defects of character - and my defects had character."

The program calls for a radical reversal in lifestyle and attitudes if sobriety with serenity is to be attained. The alcoholic and family come to see that this is not an arbitrary matter to be taken lightly, but is in fact a matter of life and death. Continued growth is imperative in all dimensions of life. The Big Book states,

We have emphasized willingness as being indispensable. Are we now ready to let God remove from us all the things which we have admitted are objectionable? Can He now take them all - every one?

If we still cling to something we will not let go, we ask God to help us be willing.³⁸

The emphasis has shifted from the articulation of past wrongs to a commitment to work on one's present attitudes. The focal point of that shift is the willingness to do something about one's entire character. The self disclosure of Step Five leads to greater self-awareness which in turn prompts self-improvement in other aspects of life. This is a processive dynamic in the phenomenon of transformation as the person never achieves absolute eradication of all character defects. Some defects resistively remain, others the person improves upon and still others may be eliminated. The point of the step is to move towards the ideal, not achievement or attainment of the ideal. The self-help groups understanding of this in relationship to God who is capable of removing such defects is that, "He asks only that we try as best we know how to make progress in the building of character."³⁹ Working at self improvement requires an attitude of patience, a character quality which most alcoholics and family members do not have.

In Step Six, the alcoholic tries to be honest about those attitudinal dispositions which constantly plague him/her. Perhaps there remains a sense of superiority or inferiority, grandiosity or self-pity. Self righteousness and a new kind of pride issuing from the experience of new found sobriety becomes problematic. One alcoholic poignantly stated it in this fashion, "Some of us begin to boast about the depths of our degradation as though we should be proud of it." In

³⁸Alcoholics Anonymous, 76.

³⁹Twelve Steps, 66.

A.A. circles, members are sensitive to a kind of competitive attitude which may emerge in the telling of their story in order to top others present. Closed mindedness, escape into isolation, rationalization and procrastination for getting on with the tasks of living are all defects which weigh mightily against the change process. For the alcoholic, "Delay is dangerous, and rebellion may be fatal. This is the exact point at which we abandon limited objectives, and move towards God's will for us."⁴⁰

The family system may have an equally difficult time with the dynamics of the Sixth Step. As has been pointed out, it is difficult for family members to admit their complicity in what has transpired in the family system. All 'defects of character' had been laid at the door of the practicing alcoholic. When the alcoholic abuse has been eliminated, it is much more difficult to find an excuse for one's actions.

The family may not always be 'ready' to have God remove these defects of character. There is not only primary pain, but also secondary gain for the family members of the alcoholic.

A spouse may 'take over' responsibility for the family and become accustomed to and proud of making all the decisions. This increases his/her sense of importance. Accolades which come from friends and family for 'putting up' with the situation add to the subtle gains which alcoholism provides.

Children learn to be evasive of responsibility through persuasive tactics as they appeal to others to feel sorry for them and

⁴⁰Twelve Steps, 70.

absolve them of responsibility for growth and maturity. These manifestations of irresponsibility through projecting an image of helpless entrapment moulds the family patterns of behavior which become difficult to eradicate. The point bears repeating that the entire system is in need of the transformation experience. As each member of the family works at systematically dealing with their 'defects of character' the whole family learns to live with the same serenity which the recovering alcoholic has found in his/her sobriety.

Step Seven: Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.

The emphasis in Step Six was readiness for change, the essence of Step Seven is to execute that change by the power and grace of God. Once again, the reoccurring theme of the need for humility is to be noted,

This is the step in which Bill had originally included the words 'on his knees.' A.A. recognizes how essential humility is in the recovery and continued sobriety of an alcoholic. It is a word that is frequently used in their meetings and in their talks.⁴¹

It is obvious in a society which emphasizes achievements and encourages egocentricity through self aggrandizement that this step is asking for the polar opposite. This is not to suggest that the step encourages self-denigration, false humility or personal depreciation; but rather an openness to the reality of who one is and the necessity of accepting what one is. In the insatiable quest for prominence, prestige, power and wealth; qualities and values necessary for a life of serenity were forfeited.

⁴¹Keller, 56.

In all these strivings, so many of them well-intentioned, our crippling handicap had been our lack of humility. We had lacked the perspective to see that character-building and spiritual values had to come first, and that material satisfactions were not the purpose of living.⁴²

A revamping and reordering of priorities in life is a significant part of that transformation process. There is a concerted move from a materialistic to a character conscious orientation; from egocentricity to theocentricity, from self-sufficiency to reliance upon God and others. This is a particularly difficult change. "A whole lifetime geared to self-centeredness cannot be set in reverse all at one. Rebellion dogs our every step at first."⁴³

The grief in giving up long cherished attitudes and patterns of behavior is incalculable. There is not only the persistence of the patterns, but the fear of failure in the process which undermines the alcoholic's efforts. The dynamics of the group are essential in moving through this painful process.

Then in A.A., we looked and listened. Everywhere we saw failure and misery transformed by humility into priceless assets. We heard story after story of how humility had brought strength out of weakness. In every case, pain had been the price of admission into a new life.⁴⁴

One of the most telling statements in this whole procedure and process is the change in attitude from resistance to renewal through resolution of the person's own disposition.⁴⁵ Humility then becomes a gift which is given rather than a virtue which is sought after.

⁴²Twelve Steps, 72.

⁴³Twelve Steps, 74.

⁴⁴Twelve Steps, 76.

⁴⁵Twelve Steps, 77.

Fear is overcome through faith. "The chief activator of our defects has been self-centered fear - primarily fear that we would lose something we already possessed or would fail to get something we demanded."⁴⁶

A transition in attitude through transformation is vital for the family system as well. As noted in Step Six, it may be more difficult for the family to acknowledge their defects because their disposition and attitude has been that of the helpless victim. It needs to be re-emphasized, that if this approach to recovery through transformation is to issue in health for the entire family system, then all members of the family need to be involved. The health of the family is contingent on the health of the individuals and conversely the health of the individual is largely dependent on the health of the whole family. There is thus an interfacing and interpenetrating relationship. Individuals within the system can recover without other members becoming well, but the individual or individuals usually do not fare well within the system which is operating with old and established attitudes and patterns of behavior. To borrow a biblical analogy, one cannot put new wine into old wineskins. All must become involved or problems will ensue for the entire system.

An illustration of this point is the case of a teenage female whose anger at, in this case, her father was so great that she resisted and rebelled against the idea of attending Alateen. The rest of the family felt very comfortable with their new style of life, but she felt

⁴⁶Twelve Steps, 77.

and expressed continuing bitterness and resentment. As a result, she finally left home in anger. Even though heart-rending, the family came to accept her decision and was able to live comfortably with her decision while enjoying the peace and serenity which their new lifestyle afforded to them. An individual or individuals who do not change when the system changes often desert the system in favor of another which will align with their attitudes and dispositions.

Step Eight: Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.

Steps Eight and Nine are companion steps as were Six and Seven. The recovery and transformation process moves from the personal to the social aspects of the disease. Having come to terms with the intrapersonal dynamics, the attention is now focused on the interpersonal dimension. In the previous steps the stage has become set for Steps Eight and Nine wherein the emphasis is placed upon concrete action which is consistent with the transformation in attitudes and lifestyle. The Big Book states it in this way,

We subjected ourselves to a drastic self-appraisal. Now we go out to our fellows and repair the damage done in the past. We attempt to sweep away the debris which has accumulated out of our effort to live on self-will and run the show ourselves. If we haven't the will to do this, we ask until it comes. Remember it was agreed at the beginning we would go to any lengths for victory over alcohol.⁴⁷

Sobriety with serenity is not secure without this dimension of reviewing the past. It should be noted that each step requires more courage and ego strength than the last step. Slowly, but

⁴⁷Alcoholics Anonymous, 76.

systematically the program nurtures and nudges the person toward greater maturity and responsibility.

Needless to say, Step Eight is a painful process of recall, however,

...if a willing start is made, then the great advantages of doing this will so quickly reveal themselves that the pain will be lessened as one obstacle after another melts away.⁴⁸

The tendency to indulge in rationalization is great. It is easier to project responsibility to others, to deny culpability and fail to come to terms with the reality of the past. Until such ghosts of the past are put to rest, they will continue to haunt the person by appearing in the form of guilt, fear and suspicion. Again the emphasis is placed on willingness and honesty. Often, "...fear conspired with pride to hinder our making a list of all the people we had harmed."⁴⁹

The point is that the path of those afflicted and affected by alcoholism is strewn with broken and damaged relationships. The resulting guilt, anger, resentment and hatred is occasion for the person to resume drinking. S/he must go to any lengths in the present to painfully review the episodes of the past so as to insure sobriety and serenity for the future.

Harm to other persons involves more than physical abuse, stealing, cheating and other obvious external actions. It includes the subtle attitudinal dispositions towards the world and the people who inhabit the social arena of the person. The alcoholic's attitude and behavior have elicited negative responses and feelings from numerous

⁴⁸Twelve Steps, 80.

⁴⁹Twelve Steps, 81.

people with whom s/he comes into contact. An awareness of this fact is the first step in removing the obstacles which have blocked healthy relationships in the past.

This step acknowledges the basic social character of human beings and the importance of healthy relationships. Stated succinctly, "It is the beginning of the end of isolation from our fellows and from God."⁵⁰

The subtle nature of the disease as it affects the family structure renders this an important step for family members as well. They might begin right within the family structure itself. The practicing alcoholic has often been the brunt of the family's resentment and hostility even when s/he may not have been the precipitating factor. Intrafamilial relationships have been damaged in the nuclear family as well as interfamilial relationships in the extended family. Relationships with people outside of the family have also been determined by the alcoholism and harm has been done. An irritable spouse, an unruly child, or a frustrated working companion are evidence of the manner in which the entire family has harmed those around them. Taking advantage of others, overreacting and acting out feelings in inappropriate ways are all evidence of actions and reactions among family members which can harm others.

It is important for family members to take inventory of their relationships in the past and to assume responsibility in making amends not only to the alcoholic and other members of the family, but to their

⁵⁰Twelve Steps, 84.

social contacts as well who have suffered as a result of their attitudes and behavior. Remembrance without restitution and reconciliation constitutes an exercise in futility and would deliver a fatal blow to the recovery and transformation experience, hence the necessity of Step Nine, the implementation of the efforts put forth in Step Eight.

Step Nine: Make direct amends to such person wherever possible, except when to do so, would injure them or others.

Execution always follows resolution. This step requires, "Good judgment, a careful sense of timing, courage, and prudence - these are the qualities we shall need when we take Step Nine."⁵¹ Keller notes with accuracy the dynamics which are involved in undertaking this step,

Again he must swallow his pride, let go of any bitterness toward any and all that he has harmed, and make direct amends to such people whenever possible, 'except when to do so would injure them or others.' That word 'direct' makes it tough.⁵²

The number of people who have been affected is often legion and there is no guarantee that they will either understand or accept the efforts at amends which are made. The critical aspect of this step is not whether the amends are accepted, but rather that an honest and genuine attempt at making amends has been made. The effect of the effort alone is salutary. However, if the person has worked the program diligently to this point, s/he has usually gained sufficient ego strength and understanding of the disease and recovery process to

⁵¹Twelve Steps, 85.

⁵²Keller, 57.

courageously forge ahead. The difficulty comes in dealing with those who are still hostile.

Nevertheless, with a person we dislike, we take the bit in our teeth. It is harder to go to an enemy than to a friend, but we find it much more beneficial to us. We go to him in a helpful and forgiving spirit, confessing our former ill feeling and expressing our regret.⁵³

The person who does Step Nine must be thoroughly prepared for whatever response s/he may receive. Lack of success in effecting reconciliation can lead to depression and despair and a resumption of drinking if the person is not ready for rejection. Conversely, success in reconciliation, resolution and restitution can lead to making errors in judgment about what is shared with whom and others can be harmed in the process. Discretion is the sine qua non for the execution of this step. The critical question the person must ask himself/herself is whether s/he is practicing prudence or evasion in relationship to others. Prudence requires right timing and good judgment, evasion is a tactic used to keep one's distance and avoid the fear of a face to face encounter. Step Nine is not a natural step, but a necessary step in the processive transformation experience. Thus,

Although these reparations take innumerable forms, there are some general principles which we find guiding. Reminding ourselves that we have decided to go to any lengths to find a spiritual experience, we ask that we be given strength and direction to do the right thing, no matter what the personal consequences may be. We may lose our position or reputation or face jail, but we are willing. We have to be. We must not shrink at anything.⁵⁴

The formula which expresses the essence of what occurs in Step Nine is the deflation of the Big Ego. It is directly proportionate to the

⁵³Alcoholics Anonymous, 77.

⁵⁴Alcoholics Anonymous, 79.

strengthening of the healthy ego or self as intended by God. Acts of restitution result in reconciled and renewed relationships.

Lest this step be construed as a therapeutic procedure designed for the person alone, the program challenges the person to look beyond the salutary benefits which accrue to him/her and to fit the step into a wider context.

At the moment (of doing Steps 8 and 9) we are trying to put our lives in order. But this is not an end in itself. Our real purpose is to fit ourselves to be of maximum service to God and the people about us.⁵⁵

The subtle, but important change in direction is to be carefully noted as the person moves from the self out to others under the rubric of service to God. With this movement comes a new sensation of freedom. This new freedom involves a significant shift in self perception. In the transformation process, the past can be remembered rather than repressed. Now the person can move outside of himself/herself and utilize his/her experience to relate to others rather than indulging in self pity. As the Big Book speaks of this new self perception it states, "We will suddenly realize that God is doing for us what we could not do for ourselves."⁵⁶ Theologically this is a succinct definition for the word grace. With this experience a new attitude of graciousness emerges in relationships as the transformation process effected by God brings about liberation and freedom.

It is important to note that a distinction is made between being humble and being servile in this enterprise. The purpose is not to

⁵⁵Alcoholics Anonymous, 77.

⁵⁶Alcoholics Anonymous, 83-84.

forfeit a healthy ego along with the inflated ego which accompanies the disease. Rather it is an attempt to achieve an integrated balance of a healthy love and respect for oneself while at the same time humbly owning one's responsibility for past episodes. "We should be sensible, tactful, considerate and humble without being servile or scraping. As God's people we stand on our feet; we don't crawl before anyone."⁵⁷

Making amends is part and parcel of the family's transformation process in recovery. Often family members feel that they are the only ones who have been wronged and that they owe amends to no one, especially the practicing alcoholic. The mending of relationships and amending of ways must begin in the family system. The insidious nature of the disease seriously affects all relationships in the family, not only those associated with the one who is drinking. The same is true for the wider social circle. Ownership of feelings, attitudes and actions on the part of the family and concomitant direct making of amends will hasten the healing process and health of the whole system.

The exception to making direct amends is the situation in which 'others' might be hurt or harmed. The person in the recovery process has grown to the point that the integrity or sensitivity of another person should not be violated or placed in jeopardy for the sake of 'clearing the slate' for oneself. Whether it be the practicing alcoholic or a member of the family, an attempt at making amends for an attitude or action which would disgrace or embarrass another person is not permissible. The last three words of the step read, 'them or

⁵⁷Alcoholics Anonymous, 83.

others,' not them or us! Making amends can be a very painful experience for the person working the steps, but for the recovering alcoholic or family member it is the kind of pain which has the salutary result of promoting growth and gaining greater maturity.

Step Ten: Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.

The ongoing or processive nature of the transformation phenomenon is accentuated in Step Ten. The struggle for sobriety with serenity is a one day at a time growth issue. Sobriety is contingent upon watchfulness in one's lifestyle lest the old ingrained patterns again begin to take over. Keller notes,

Because A.A. recognizes that at any time the Ego is a dangerous enemy and that, therefore, this is not just a 'once for all' process, the next step deals with the importance of continuing to take a personal inventory and when wrong promptly admit it. That word 'promptly' is particularly significant for the alcoholic in his sobriety. If it is not done this way, the wrong will fester within him and can easily start a serious infection that will some day break open in the form of a drinking spree. Alcoholics who have been dry for some time and then take to the bottle again are quite often 'infected' in this way.⁵⁸

The Big Book states,

We have entered the world of the Spirit. Our next function is to grow in understanding and effectiveness. This is not an overnight matter. It should continue for a lifetime. Continue to watch for selfishness, dishonesty, resentment, and fear. When these crop up, we ask God at once to remove them. We discuss them with someone immediately and make amends quickly if we have harmed anyone. Then we resolutely turn our thoughts to someone we can help. Love and tolerance of others is our code.⁵⁹

The A.A. literature suggests that there are varying kinds of

⁵⁸Keller, 58.

⁵⁹Alcoholics Anonymous, 84.

inventories which are useful. There is the 'spot check' which consists of extemporaneous checks in response to exigencies which arise existentially and require closer scrutiny and analysis. There is the daily inventory at the end of the day which the person reflects in his/her thoughts about the events of that day. Finally, there is for many an annual or semi-annual check in depth of the progress made and areas still requiring growth and understanding.⁶⁰ This is not the same as retaking a Fourth or Fifth Step as many do, but it comes close to it.

The purpose of this constant vigilance is to be on guard against old pitfalls and thinking which lead to loss of control over one's life. The step moves beyond simple self serving in that one can be most functional only when one's life is in order. Transformation constitutes a radical reversal in lifestyle and the threat of a return to the former attitudes and actions is always there. An A.A. slogan states it succinctly, "we are just one drink away from our next drunk!"

The Tenth Step is not a retreat into morbidity or self degradation because of one's humanness, rather it is a vital necessity for life!

...we must be careful not to drift into worry, remorse or morbid reflection, for that would diminish our usefulness to others. After making our review we ask God's forgiveness and inquire what corrective measures should be taken.⁶¹

Not only the negative and the positive actions require scrutiny, but also the motives for the actions. The feeling tone and attitudes

⁶⁰Twelve Steps, 91.

⁶¹Alcoholics Anonymous, 86.

behind that which is done each day is critical. One can do the right thing for the wrong reasons and in so doing block rather than encourage growth and maturity. Coming to terms honestly with one's motivational impulses requires a great deal of insight.

There are cases where our ancient enemy, rationalization, has stepped in and has justified conduct which was really wrong. The temptation here is to imagine that we had good motives and reasons when we really didn't.⁶²

Once again, the same prevails for the entire social system in which the alcoholic lives. Patterns of behavior practiced out of force of habit and as coping mechanisms for a period of years often quickly re-emerge in a time of crisis. Even as the alcoholic needs to take continual inventory, so also must other members of the family system as they practice 'vigilance' in their lives.

Step Eleven: Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understand Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.

The surrender process by which the transformation process is set in motion is strengthened and supported through this new lifestyle. Each day the person comes to understand in greater measure the nature of healthy dependency upon God whereby sobriety with serenity can be enjoyed. The discipline of prayer and meditation are indigenous to this process.

For those who adopt the program having had negative feelings associated with the idea of God or anything religious, there may be

⁶²Twelve Steps, 96-97.

serious resistance. However, the step judiciously adds as in previous steps - God as we understand Him. For the most part, those persons who have adopted the program as a new way of life will have come to have by this time not only some understanding, but some concept of God or a Higher Power. The veterans in the program see the discipline of prayer and meditation as vital for spiritual health as food, air and water are necessary for physical well being. The Tenth Step often serves as a natural entree to the Eleventh Step.

There is a direct linkage among self-examination, meditation, and prayer. Taken separately, these practices can bring much relief and benefit. But when they are logically related and interwoven, the result is an unshakable foundation for life.⁶³

Prayer and meditation are more than perfunctory pious practices, they become a way of life.

Prayer and meditation likewise serve to relax and revitalize the person. It keeps the relationship of the creature and the Creator in perspective. Practicing alcoholics have been accustomed to instant gratification provided by the alcohol and have lived as though the world revolved around them and their wants. Now the focus of attention is redirected to God. The Spirit of the Universe rather than the spirits in the bottle becomes the sustaining source of life. The mode and method of meditation are inconsequential; the purpose of the practice is crucial which is,

...to improve our conscious contact with God, with His grace, wisdom and love. And let's always remember that meditation is in reality intensely practical. One of its first fruits is emotional balance. With it we can broaden and deepen the channel between ourselves and

⁶³Twelve Steps, 100.

God as we understand Him.⁶⁴

The function of prayer and meditation is to bring the will and the way of the alcoholic into conformity with the will and way of God as God is understood by that person. This represents a way in which egocentrism is yielded up in favor of theocentrism.

Deciphering the will and the way of God through prayer and meditation is not an easy task. How does one distinguish between divine will and self-will? A careful analysis sometimes reveals that, "...the thoughts that seem to come from God are not answers at all. They prove to be well-intentioned rationalizations."⁶⁵ The person checks this out for himself/herself by considering the inner promptings in relationship to the desired effect. If the effect is self-serving in the sense of inflating the big Ego, the prompting is likely a rationalization. If the prompting is that of love and concern in caring for others as well as oneself, then that is in conformity with the will of God.

Theologically this step seeks to aid the person in understanding that the purpose of prayer is not to magically manipulate God, but rather an openness to what God would have him/her do. Prayer is not so much vertical ascent of petitions to God to use that imagery, but vertical descent of the will and way of God for the person.

Prayer and meditation are likewise ways of overcoming the sense of isolation. There is a sense of relatedness to the whole universe. Prayer and meditation serve to substantiate and nurture the awakened

⁶⁴Twelve Steps, 104.

⁶⁵Twelve Steps, 106.

sense of trust which had lain dormant until the person did the Fifth Step. The person comes to believe with his/her whole mind and being that, "...God lovingly watches over us. We know that when we turn to Him, all will be well with us, here and hereafter."⁶⁶

The strength and power which comes through prayer meditation is a valuable and necessary asset for the family as well. It is a matter of mutual growth for the whole system in relationship to one another as well as God. Families often come to sense and realize the power of God in their midst when they begin to practice their prayer life together. The sense of isolation, estrangement and alienation is overcome as corporately they seek to know the will and way of God for their lives. Prayer and meditation become a new family ritual replacing the destructive interactions of the past. A new sense of solidarity and serenity graces the family as together they grow in their relationship to one another and God. Step Eleven is practiced both privately by the individuals in the family and often publically or corporately in their family gatherings. As individuals and as a family, prayer and meditation empowers them to do God's will in their lives. In this healthy dependent relationship upon God new strength is afforded them not only to know, but to do. It is in both knowing and doing that transformation occurs through the power which God supplies.

Step Twelve: Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

This final step has been called by veteran A.A. and Al-Anon

⁶⁶Twelve Steps, 108.

members the crown and glory of the program. It is a living response to the gift of sobriety given to the alcoholic and his/her family. It epitomizes what the program is all about and theologically is an incarnate way of extending grace to others who suffer from the disease. The practice of Step Twelve for the alcoholic is a way of insuring continued sobriety with serenity. Members of Al-Anon experience the same kind of awakening and are enabled to reach out to members of other families who suffer the effects of alcoholism. The step has the two-fold purpose and impact of maintaining the new lifestyle for the alcoholic and family while also providing the much needed understanding and love to others who are not a part of the program. There emerges a healthy self concern which is intricately bound up with concern for others. The alcoholic understands and knows the situation of those who still drink while also bringing the new perspective of sobriety. This enables him/her to relate most meaningfully to others.⁶⁷

The step speaks of a 'spiritual awakening' which occurs as a result of following the Twelve Steps. This awakening for the most part is a result of constant growth, development and an awareness of a Power which is greater than the self which can restore the person to sanity and a new life. This spiritual experience, as an alternate reading of the step states, can be undergirded by a sudden and often dramatic experience in which the person senses the presence of God. Numerous

⁶⁷Keller, 59.

alcoholics report having had such an experience in their recovery process.⁶⁸ Whether the transformation process includes such a dramatic experience or not is not the primary issue. Such an experience undergirds the transformation process, but is not the transformation in and of itself. Alcoholics Anonymous postulates that the transformation comes about as a result of working all of the steps.

The literature describes a spiritual awakening in this manner.

When a man or a woman has a spiritual awakening, the most important meaning of it is that he has now become able to do, feel, and believe that which he could not do before on his unaided strength and resources alone. He has been granted a gift which amounts to a new state of consciousness and being. He has been set on a path which tells him he is really going somewhere, that life is not a dead end, not something to be endured or mastered. In a very real sense he has been transformed, because he has laid hold of a source of strength which, in one way or another, he had hitherto denied himself.⁶⁹

The spiritual awakening, the conversion experience, the initiation of the transformation process lays the foundation for the years of sobriety with serenity to come. Fundamental to this new lifestyle is the willingness to acknowledge that a Power greater than self not only exists, but also promises assistance in aiding the person to live by the spiritual principles set down by the program.

The revolving circle and cycle of addiction and illness is traded for the revolving circle and cycle of assisting others to health while at the same time improving one's own health.

Helping others is the foundation stone of your recovery. A kindly act one in a while isn't enough. You have to act as the Good Samaritan every day, if need be.⁷⁰

⁶⁸Cf. Experience of Bill Wilson, Supra, 159-160.

⁶⁹Twelve Steps, 110 (Emphasis mine).

⁷⁰Alcoholics Anonymous, 97.

The willingness on the part of A.A. and Al-Anon members to be of support and help to each other as well as those who call upon them for help is an impressive phenomenon. They will spend time, money, energy for others, often denying themselves and making great sacrifices in order to be of assistance and share the story. Their new found lifestyle is such a joy that they respond without reservation to others who are seriously seeking for the same kind of new life.

There is a great sense of satisfaction and joy when a member of one of these groups reaches out to others and vicariously experiences with them the transformation process.

Practically every A.A. member declares that no satisfaction has been deeper and no joy greater than in a Twelfth Step job well done. To watch the eyes of men and women open with wonder as they move from darkness into light, to see their lives quickly fill with new purpose and meaning, to see whole families reassembled, to see the alcoholic outcast received back into his community in full citizenship, and above all to watch these people awaken to the presence of a loving God in their lives - these things are the substance of what we receive as we carry A.A.'s message to the next alcoholic.⁷¹

These words could as easily have been written by a member of Al-Anon about its work. From personal experience as a pastor, it was amazing to see the change in people even after experiencing one meeting. The first benefit is the breaking of the isolation. Even though family members know intellectually that their problem is the same as that of others, nonetheless they feel that they are unique, that no one could possibly understand, that their situation is worse than that of anyone else in the world until they hear the reports of other Al-Anon members. Suddenly they are not alone, others have felt the same deep

⁷¹Twelve Steps, 113.

feelings and experienced similar episodes and events in their lives. One family member commented, "I couldn't believe what I was hearing, it sounded like me talking!"

Family members experience new hope when an Al-Anon member makes a Twelfth Step call. It may be an Al-Anon member who can share a story of family recovery which lifts the spirit. It may be an Al-Anon member who has found new peace and serenity even while living with a practicing alcoholic. Whatever the circumstance, there is always help and hope.

The Twelfth Step work is mutually beneficial for the helper as well as the one being helped. The organizations grow numerically as more and more members reach out and assist others who still suffer from alcoholism. The program recognizes the importance of the person being on solid ground personally before attempting to do Twelfth Step work,

Be sure you are on solid spiritual ground before you start and that your motive in going is thoroughly good. Do not think of what you will get out of the occasion. Think of what you can bring to it. But if you are shaky, you had better work with another alcoholic instead!⁷²

Members of A.A. and Al-Anon come to see the truth and experience of reality of what it means that one receives in giving. The gift of new life places the person in a position of responsive responsibility towards others.

Your job now is to be at the place where you may be of maximum helpfulness to others, so never hesitate to go anywhere if you can be helpful. You should not hesitate to visit the most sordid spot on earth on such an errand. Keep on the firing line of life with these motives and God will keep you unharmed.⁷³

⁷²Alcoholics Anonymous, 102.

⁷³Alcoholics Anonymous, 102.

The step includes more than just moving out and assisting others in the recovery process, it is 'practicing these principles in all of our affairs.' This is the radically new disposition and lifestyle which permeates the recovering person's entire being, whether it be the practicing alcoholic or members of the family. The person is enjoined to carry this spirit of concern, love, tolerance and caring into all relationships in life. Thus the program gives the person the tools to deal with every exigency of existence. Members of A.A. and Al-Anon come to realize that elimination of the drinking is but the first small step in recovery, the problems of life are still there and need to be dealt with in a creative manner. Sobriety does not grant or insure immunity from calamity, however, the new lifestyle does provide a new perspective. The person can now ask, "Can we transform these calamities into assets, sources of growth and comfort to ourselves and those about us?"⁷³ The answer is a resounding 'yes!'

This approach is similar to that advocated by Alfred Adler in his 'individual psychology.' Adler contended that negativities and liabilities can be transformed into sources of growth and strength. Methodologically, Adler stated that this was done through re-education in the client-therapist relationship whereas the self-help groups contend that this is an act of God which occurs in the systematic working of the steps to recovery and supported by the social matrix of the group itself. Having worked through the intrapersonal and interpersonal dynamics of the disease and having experienced the

⁷³Twelve Steps, 117.

transformation of life through surrender and the adoption of a radically new lifestyle; the renewed person gains a new perspective and experiences new and higher plateaus of progress in his/her spiritual journey.

This is a program of spiritual progress, not perfection as the popular slogan of A.A. states it. The person now has the tools to deal constructively with life. The realization of the conflicts (chapter three) are there, but there is now a constructive way of dealing with the conflicts and resolving them satisfactorily.

It has been contended that if the family is to remain intact and experience serenity, it is important that all members involve themselves in the recovery and transformation process. Beginning with the marital relationship, good results are experienced as the partners reach out to one another and employ the principles of the program. The progress in recovery is noted in this manner.

Our main problem is not how we are to stay married, it is how to be more happily married by eliminating the severe emotional twists that have so often stemmed from alcoholism⁷⁵

This concern is likewise extended to the rest of the family as they work out a mutually agreeable interdependent relationship.

The A.A. group for many recovering alcoholics provides the social support network if they have no family or the family has been forfeited as a result of the disease. Reaching out to others in the group and those outside the group who still suffer from alcoholism creates for these 'loners' as they are sometimes called, a climate of community and caring so necessary for their social well being.

⁷⁵Twelve Steps, 121.

The beauty of the groups lies in the importance of genuine relationships of love and caring which are established and continue to be established as the health of the person progresses. It is a radical transformation which manifests itself in a growth process which continues from day to day. It is the message of people who have finally confronted their problems head on and resolved them in a constructive rather than destructive manner.

We have been talking about problems because we are problem people who have found a way up and out, and who wish to share our knowledge of that way with all who can use it. For it is only by accepting and solving our problems that we can begin to get right with ourselves and with the world about us, and with Him who presides over us all. Understanding is the key to right principles and attitudes, and right action is the key to good living; therefore the joy of good living is the theme of A.A.'s Twelfth Step.⁷⁶

The time factor involved in the transformation process is different for different people and family systems, but the program promises success to all who follow its suggestions. It is an invitation to sobriety with serenity for the entire family as the system becomes transformed by the spiritual principles and dynamics of these self-help programs.

⁷⁶Twelve Steps, 129-130.

CHAPTER VII

TRANSFORMATION AND THE DYNAMICS OF GROUP PROCESS

The Twelve Steps utilized by Alcoholics Anonymous and Al-Anon provide a methodology for recovery as well as making provision for the social matrix wherein the possibility of transformation for the entire family system can occur. A study of the group dynamics and process should yield some insight with respect to the reason why this particular self-help paradigm is so effective in providing the context for transformation. The material and evidence for this section has been gained from the literature, but more importantly from personal observation of both these groups in action over the past several years. Since alcoholism develops in the social arena of existence, it is not surprising that recovery from the disease should also be experienced in a social setting. The millions of people in these two organizations who have found and experienced transformed lives bears witness to the potent effectiveness of the approach of these two groups.

A group is defined as "...a collection of individuals who have relations to one another that make them interdependent to some significant degree."¹ Persons who interact in social relationships and form groups usually do so for some designed purpose or end; be it social, task oriented or self-help in nature. Groups tend to develop intentionally for specific purposes or spontaneously provided there is a common factor or factors which draw them together. Other groups may

¹Dorwin Cartwright and Alvin Zander (eds.) Group Dynamics (New York: Harper & Row, 1968) 46.

emerge or form by external designation whether the determining criteria be age, sex, race or some other category. As the dynamics of the group which lead to the possibility of transformation are considered, the first factor which comes to one's attention is intentionality.

A. COMMONALITY OF PURPOSE

In the case of Alcoholics Anonymous and Al-Anon, the group formation is very intentional. Its primary focus and purpose is enabling the participants to deal constructively with the disease of alcoholism as it affects the one drinking (A.A.) and the one affected by the drinking (Al-Anon). For the one who is drinking, A.A. is cognizant of the truth articulated by Tiebout that there must be direct treatment of the symptom. The plain and simple fact so often overlooked is that for recovery and transformation one must stop drinking. The individual cannot do this for himself/herself, so the group enables them to do what they could not do for themselves. The preamble used at most A.A. meetings is that these are men and women who have banded together to stop drinking. This is the foundational purpose of A.A. As such, one of their twelve traditions as an organization is that they do not affiliate with any effort which promotes politics, economics or religion. Proliferating energy and efforts could preclude or interfere with their avowed purpose in organizing, namely to stop drinking.

Al-Anon presents the same picture of commonality of purpose in seeking the most viable way of living with alcoholism whether the family member is a practicing alcoholic or not. This is accomplished through self-awareness and coming to grips with the distortions in

reality occasioned by the dynamics of the disease. The sole purpose of the organization is to learn to live comfortably with oneself through the admission of powerlessness over alcohol, the surrender of the alcoholic to the care of God and the dawning reality that one's life need not be determined by the lethal dynamics of alcoholism.

Members of A.A. and Al-Anon have to this point in their lives engaged in fruitless and futile attempts to deal with the alcoholism resulting in fragmentation of the family social system as well as the individuals who are a part of that system. The self-help groups move from fragmentation to focus singularly on the issue of the disease as it comes to affect them. Such a focal point reduces dissipation of energy due to frustration and a sense of helplessness and hopelessness. It is a clarion call to singularity of purpose as the groups form intentionally and thus create an atmosphere in which the transformation process has an opportunity to be set in motion.

B. REALITY OF ACCEPTANCE

An attitude of acceptance permeates the air of A.A. and Al-Anon meetings immediately putting at ease those who often falteringly and fearfully consent to attend. The commonality of experience is a decisive factor as the sense of isolation, estrangement and alienation is stripped away for the newcomer. One senses intuitively that members of these groups are genuine in their gestures of graciousness towards new members. An immediate bond is established relationally as new participants, often for the first time in their lives, are received into a social setting where judgments, moralizing and rejection are not the order of the day. For the practicing alcoholic who senses s/he is

a social pariah, this dynamic in and of itself is a compelling component and a novel experience as s/he is unconditionally accepted not for what s/he could be, but for what s/he is as a person.

Speaking specifically about A.A., Blum notes,

There is no doubt that A.A. fellowships offer an opportunity to lonely, humiliated, often times socially inept and certainly defeated persons to come together and find in each other sources of hope and new ways of learning how to get along with each other and with people in the larger society.²

Parallel dynamics of isolation, estrangement and rejection prevail for members of the family. Newcomers to Al-Anon suddenly realize that they are not alone in their dilemma, nor are their experiences and feelings unique. The sense of belonging and the awareness of acceptance leads to great emotional release for new participants. Group meetings become the life line for many individuals who were withering on the vine of isolation. The presence of acceptance in both of these self-help groups leads to and undergirds a crucial dynamic in group work, namely cohesiveness.

Cartwright defines cohesiveness as "...the degree to which the members of a group desire to remain a group."³ As persons within the groups begin to experience the transformation process, they become bonded together in ever closer ties. The 'in-group' mentality prevails and the cohesiveness of the group intensifies as the sense of acceptance, support and love prevails. With respect to A.A., Blum

²Eva Marie and Richard H. Blum, Alcoholism (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1967) 164.

³Cartwright and Zander, 91.

notes an interesting psychological dynamic which evolved as a result of the phenomenon of cohesiveness through mutual acceptance.

...members looked upon themselves as an 'outcast-elite'; whereas outsiders, 'squares,' were viewed with some suspicion and contempt - especially the professionals, the 'headshrinkers' and 'head cinders.' This division of their world into two, the 'ins' and 'out,' has probably served useful functions. It has consolidated their group and has inflated their self-esteem by creating an aristocracy of the rejected.⁴

The members of A.A. thus transform their perceived negative situation in life into a positive one. The disease becomes a rallying point for them, strengthening the sense of cohesiveness through the personal bonds and relationships which have developed.

Among members of Al-Anon, the dynamic is not that of an 'aristocracy of the rejected,' but rather what this writer will term an 'aggragate of the affected.' The bond of cohesiveness is forged by the similariy of experiences and feelings which affect the people around the alcoholic. The group experience enables people to become aware of their own complicity in the dynamics of the disease as well as personal awareness concerning the lines of responsibility in relationship to the practicing alcoholic, other members of the family and society as well as oneself.

In both groups, there is the awareness and practice of mutual support which increases the sense of cohesiveness. Members are available to each other on a twenty-four hour basis. Support is rendered without regard for personal sacrifice in the process. This is an important dynamic in the transformation process as this kind of love

⁴Blum and Blum, 160.

and concern is modeled for each other. A new member of Al-Anon one time quipped, "I thought that such loving concern was only an ideal talked about, but here I have really experienced it."

As a result of cohesiveness, Cartwright and Zander note four consequences: there is maintenance of membership which insures the perpetuation of the group, the group has and exercises power over its members, there is participation and loyalty to that group (the loyalty is increased by continual participation) and there are personal gains or consequences stemming from the situation.⁵

The membership in these self-help groups continues to increase each year. This is not to say that many members are not lost along the way, but numerical increases are experienced by each group each year. As individuals not only see in others, but experience in themselves the reality of transformation, it becomes a pearl of great price. Sobriety with serenity for the alcoholic family system is given priority over all other commitments.

The power which the group exercises over its members is a subtle one. While coercive measures are not overtly employed, there is a covert sense of having failed the group as well as oneself when not in attendance. The realization that one's sobriety as an alcoholic and one's sanity as a member of the family is contingent upon continuing group participation is a strong incentive and power which shapes the person's life.

As a result participation increases the sense of loyalty and

⁵Cartwright and Zander, 103-105.

conversely loyalty insures continued participation. It is often difficult for new members to precisely articulate the dynamic which lures them back to meetings. One participant summarized it in this manner, "They have something that I want and I'm going to keep coming until I find out what it is and I have it too."

It is likely the sense of serenity with which participants are able to embrace life and the circumstances confronting them which holds such great appeal. The personal gains take the shape of newly established relationships of genuineness and depth, a new found sense of self worth and self esteem, a real sense of belonging and importance as well as the realization that all of life's exigencies can be met with a sense of equanimity.

C. DYNAMIC OF ATTRACTION

An oft-quoted slogan of A.A. and Al-Anon is that, "we have a program of attraction rather than promotion." Attraction is most often predicated on the basis of the assessment made by the individual who is contemplating joining a group. The desirable and undesirable consequences are weighed in the balance as the pay-off for membership is compared with the risks and the costs involved.

Cartwright and Zander note four important variables involved in attraction: namely affiliative needs for whatever reason a person might give, a need to belong; or the person may be lured by the goals, programs or prestige of the group in question; it may be an awareness of beneficial results accruing to the individual in addition to the affiliative needs or finally it may be that in comparison with other

groups, this particular group is the most attractive providing fulfillment for specific kinds of needs.⁶

Rarely are people attracted to these groups because of affiliative needs per se. Most practicing alcoholics and family members choose to isolate themselves and shun social interaction. A.A. and Al-Anon have important goals and programs, but they would not be categorized as groups which carry great social prestige. One alcoholic rather humorously stated it this way, "My goal in life as a young man was certainly not to grow up in order to become a member of A.A.!" Few members are capable of rationally weighing the beneficial results which may accrue to them through affiliation with the organization. Similarly, the fourth dynamic involving the attractiveness of the group because it provides fulfillment for specific kinds of needs is certainly an important consideration, but needs to be articulated more dramatically.

People join A.A. and Al-Anon because they are desperate! There is a sense of despair and defeat, hopelessness and helplessness. These self-help groups, if persons have even heard of them, represent for most, the epitome of un-attractiveness. Participation is an admission of defeat. Many individuals have commented, "I've tried everything else, why not this." Most people are repelled and repulsed rather than attracted to A.A. and Al-Anon until their initial encounter and positive experience with one of the groups.

The sense of revulsion at joining 'those people' in 'that group' is often somewhat ameliorated by the involvement of an A.A. or Al-Anon

⁶Cartwright and Zander, 95-98.

member who is doing Twelfth Step work. The entree into the member organization is less threatening if the person sees a model of caring exemplified in an A.A. or Al-Anon member who is willing to be of assistance in a time of crisis. If the member effectively demonstrates in his/her demeanor and attitude the embodiment of a transformed life, the seed of hope is planted which has the potential for developing itself into an experience of transformation for that person as well.

Once the person finds the courage to affiliate with one of the groups, the rigid defenses and resolute resistance begins to dissipate as the person experiences acceptance, love, understanding and support.

It is within such a context of acceptance that the transformation process can and does occur. It is aided and abetted by another dynamic of these groups which is critical in providing a milieu in which transformation can occur, namely the positive and creative approach to dissonance.

D. DYNAMIC OF DISSONANCE

When a person joins A.A. or Al-Anon, there is cognitive, emotional, physical and spiritual dissonance created within that individual. For the practicing alcoholic there is the desire to stop drinking and put one's life back in order, but there is the continuing compulsion to repeat well ingrained patterns of behavior. The new member of A.A. keenly senses the conflict between these two opposing forces, thus substantiating the thesis that the alcoholic is indeed a 'conflicted' person.

New participants in Al-Anon experience the same sense of

dissonance. Initial expressions of relief that one is not alone, that there are others who care coupled with the excitement of new relationships and possibilities are often eclipsed by the feelings of fear that one has now exposed the family problem and one's self. Several people have expressed to me after that initial sense of euphoria, the grave reservation about returning to the group. They may rationalize that the family member probably is not alcoholic. They fear that confidentiality may be violated and they have thus risked exposure to the wider community. They may rationalize that one meeting has been sufficient to give them the necessary insight to deal constructively with the problem alone. The efficacy of the program and approach may be acknowledged, but a multiplicity of fears surface which prompt the person to abandon the avenue which could lead to transformation. The threat of change in oneself and the established system is as frightening a prospect as maintaining the status quo.

Festinger and Aronson note in this connection that, "The greater the attractiveness of the rejected alternative relative to the chosen alternative, the greater the dissonance."⁷ Dealing successfully with this dissonance is a key factor in A.A. and Al-Anon work. Festinger and Aronson suggest that dissonance is removed through group interaction, that is, obtaining support from people who understand and who have experienced the same sense of dissonance in their own lives. The Twelfth Step work of A.A. and Al-Anon members is crucial at this juncture. They are careful to acknowledge and accept the dissonance.

⁷Cartwright and Zander, 130.

Coercive measures invite reinforced resistance. Rather than engaging in argumentative and persuasive discourse, the twelfth-stepper employs acceptance, understanding, patience, and low threat confessional communication of their own experience. The message is that member persons are available to be of help and support at any time, but only when the person is ready. Timing is a critical factor. Theologically one must await the 'chairoi' which cannot be determined by any 'chronos' measurement of time. The latitude of time and the longitude of experience are patiently awaited as the transformation process is set in motion.

E. REMEMBRANCE OF PAST LIFESTYLE - REINFORCEMENT OF NEW LIFESTYLE

Two parallel dynamics which are operative within the group process for members of A.A. and Al-Anon are remembrance and reinforcement. The unique quality of these processes within the context of the group are critical for an understanding of transformation.

The phenomenon of remembrance for A.A. members is noted in the importance of relating their stories or sagas within the social setting of the group meeting. The structure of this remembrance is tri-partite, "Our stories disclose in a general way what we used to be like, what happened, and what we are like now."⁸ There is no virtue in fixating on the morbidity of sordid details from the past, but there is a salutary and cleansing effect associated with continual confession

⁸Alcoholics Anonymous (New York: Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, 1955) 58.

of what it was like. The gift of transformation is accentuated by the recitation of what life was like formerly as compared to what it is like now. The 'what happened' dimension of this recall is an emphasis upon the turning point, the 'conversion' as Tiebout termed it or the transformation dynamics as it has been referred to in this paper. It is in the ritual of recitation and the recital of remembered events that the person relives both the recent and remote past. S/he then is given to rehearsing the reality of the transformation process and reinforcing that through constant rededication to the renewal of life.

For A.A. and Al-Anon members, the stark contrast in lifestyles formerly embraced compared with the newly transformed lifestyle is a memory worthy remembering, for it keeps the alcoholic sober and the Al-Anon member sane. Past, present and future are inextricably bound together in the transformation process. Minimizing or disregarding the past with its pain dulls the miracle of transformation in the present and for the future. One recovering member stated it in this fashion, "In order to know what we are and where we are going today, requires remembering who we were and where we were yesterday." Remembering the past for the sake of the present and future might be expressed as a creative tension wherein the reminder of past pain serves as an incentive for present appreciation of the gift of transformation.

Concomitant with an emphasis upon the remembrance of the past is a reinforcement of the new lifestyle for the alcoholic family. This is a matter of daily vigilance.

It is easy to let up on the spiritual program of action and rest on our laurels. We are headed for trouble if we do, for alcohol is a subtle foe. We are not cured of alcoholism. What we really have is

a daily reprieve contingent on the maintenance of our spiritual condition.⁹

A temptation for A.A. and Al-Anon members is to slip back into old patterns of behavior when confronted with a crisis. Actions and reactions have become conditioned responses and a reinforcement of the new lifestyle is a necessary component for continuing the transformation process.

Reinforcement is accomplished by frequent attendance at meetings. The systematic working of the steps as outlined in chapter six is a tremendous aid in reinforcement. A constant vigil with regard to one's attitudes and thinking is important. Stewart writes,

A.A. asks for honesty, humility, searching self-analysis, mutual aid and fellowship. Without these, no drinker, man or woman, can hope to achieve lasting recovery. The need to surrender, a process calling for humble recognition of powerlessness over alcohol and assuming that the victim is at least capable of freely choosing to surrender, brings scientific aid and genuine religious power together in one dynamic force.¹⁰

It is the awareness that the old lifestyle is always a possibility that requires reinforcement of the new lifestyle. This fact is a ready reminder that sobriety is more than abstinence from consuming beverage alcohol, it is a radical reversal in lifestyle including one's thought and affective processes.

This is the dimension of reinforcement which family members also require. Al-Anon challenges its members to alter their thinking, to deal honestly with their feelings and to approach life with a constructive and positive attitude. The weekly meetings, the close

⁹Alcoholics Anonymous, 85.

¹⁰David A. Stewart, Thirst for Freedom (Center City, MN: Hazelden, 1960) 255.

relationship with one's sponsor and the availability of other members with whom one may converse and share is all part of the reinforcement socially which allows the transformation process to continue. In this way A.A. and Al-Anon become communities within communities to be supportive of one another.

In terms of the dynamics of the groups, remembrance and reinforcement issue in greater solidarity. The greater the cohesiveness of the group, the stronger become the pressures for conformity and uniformity. Those who do not conform to the group standards and intention normally will withdraw from the fellowship of that group. This in turn provides the group with a selective membership which further intensifies the loyalty to the group. Uniformity and conformity to the program increase the chances of attaining the goal for the group. Success breeds greater identity, bondedness and loyalty. When a group has positive purposes with concomitant positive valences for attraction, the more effective it becomes. Since A.A. and Al-Anon provide a vehicle for the realization of 'new life' or a 'transformed life' which generates support from people rather than a chemical, it receives the positive endorsement of its constituency as well as society as a whole.

Since for the alcoholic and the family s/he is dealing with a life and death issue, the pressure is greater to conform to this new lifestyle because so much is at stake. When the entire family is involved in this transformation process, there is internal pressure applied by each member on the other to resolve this as a family unit. To state it in terms of group dynamics,

The pressure will be greater the more important the function to be served by the uniformity and the more that members believe that such uniformity will in fact lead to the fulfillment of the function.¹¹

Deviation from the norms established by the group often results in exclusion. In A.A. and Al-Anon it is normally the individual himself/herself who imposes the non-participation dimension by failure to attend meetings. A.A. groups and Al-Anon groups are quick to welcome back members who have 'slipped' or who have been absent from group meetings. These groups do not practice ostracism, but rather place the responsibility upon the individual for the decision to participate or not. The groups are there for support and for reality testing. The groups provide opportunity for remembering and reviewing the past by encouraging the re-telling of the story or saga and then devote their mutual efforts to reinforcement of the newly transformed lifestyle through the internal dynamics of the group itself.

F. RESTORATION AND REACHING OUT

It is an important dynamic in the work of these two groups, A.A. and Al-Anon, that the perpetuation of the groups happens by involvement with other people. Its primary focal point is restoration and reaching out to others who still suffer. These groups move quickly from theory to praxis.

"The spiritual life is not a theory. We have to live it."¹²
For those alcoholics and family members who are in the recovery process, the above quote becomes the sine qua non of existence. Life

¹¹Cartwright and Zander, 144.

¹²Alcoholics Anonymous, 83.

is more than adopting a new philosophical structure or adhering to a new set of principles which are reviewed in meetings, it is a new life of action. This involves rectifying past situations with family members as well as others whose lives have been affected by the drinking.¹³

An open and honest sharing and communication of one's life to others is done without reservation. For example,

If you have been successful in solving your own domestic problems, tell the newcomer's family how that was accomplished. In this way you can set them on the right track without becoming critical of them. The story of how you and your wife settled your difficulties is worth any amount of criticism.¹⁴

Not only does this open communication help the 'newcomer' as s/he is termed, but this self-giving and self-communication is a manifestation of transformation in the A.A. or Al-Anon member.

Showing others who suffer how we were given help is the very thing which makes life seem so worth while to us now. Cling to the thought that, in God's hands, the dark past is the greatest possession you have - the key to life and happiness for others. With it you can avert death and misery for them.¹⁵

Restoration, renewal, reaching out replace the former life of egocentricity, narcissism and irresponsibility. The shift is from self to others, from dis-ease to serenity, from decline and death to health and growth.

The reaching out is not characterized in A.A. or Al-Anon by an evangelistic fervor or publicized fanfares and zeal which know no bounds. Rather it is a humble and genuine act issuing forth from a

¹³Alcoholics Anonymous, 161.

¹⁴Alcoholics Anonymous, 100.

¹⁵Alcoholics Anonymous, 124.

person who is grateful for the gift of a transformed life and whose response to others seems to be the most appropriate way of expressing his/her gratitude for new life. When one has been given everything, the sacrifice of time, energy and effort in behalf of others is a matter of course rather than obligation. Reaching out not only helps other people, but is the key to continued growth and health for oneself.

The benediction with which the first section of the Big Book closes succinctly expresses the nature of the transformed life which characterizes active members of A.A. and Al-Anon. It states,

Abandon yourself to God as you understand God. Admit your faults to Him and to your fellows. Clear away the wreckage of your past. Give freely of what you find and join us. We shall be with you in the Fellowship of the Spirit, and you will surely meet some of us as you trudge the Road of Happy Destiny. May God bless you and keep you - until then.¹⁶

This quotation brings to mind a final dynamic operative in A.A. and Al-Anon which if not explicitly stated is always implicitly assumed and that is the religious or spiritual dimension which acts as a foundation and undergirds all of the other dynamics operative in these groups.

G. SPIRITUAL DYNAMICS IN THE GROUP PROCESS

Both A.A. and Al-Anon have no qualms about the spiritual foundation of their respective groups. Spirituality is intrinsic to the group process as well as the new lifestyle of the individuals within the group. The identification of these groups with spirituality

¹⁶Alcoholics Anonymous, 164.

often results in criticism of their approach, but no apology is made in the face of this critique.

We never apologize to anyone for depending upon our Creator. We can laugh at those who think spirituality the way of weakness. Paradoxically it is the way of strength....We never apologize for God. Instead we let Him demonstrate through us, what He can do. We ask Him to remove our fear and direct our attention to what He would have us be. At once, we commence to outgrow fear.¹⁷

Members of these respective self-help groups are quick to point out the difference between religiosity and spirituality. Religiosity in their terminology is an external display of conformity to religious rituals, practices and doctrines which may or may not be indicative of an inner transformation of spirit. Spirituality, on the other hand, is an internal transformation of the human spirit resulting from a relationship with God as God is understood by that person. Outward conformity to or compliance with a given religious persuasion may or may not accompany such an inward transformation. Inward transformation always results in concomitant change of outward attitudes and behavior towards God, others and oneself; but it does not necessarily align itself with a specific theological system nor confine itself within the parameters of an ecclesiastical structure. This is not to say that A.A. and Al-Anon reject the formal expression of religious practice. As a matter of fact, members are encouraged to affiliate with and participate in the activities of their respective churches. The issue is one of manifesting outward change as a result of inward transformation rather than encouraging outward conformity to religious principles with the intent of effecting inward transformation.

¹⁷Alcoholics Anonymous, 68.

The singular importance of the spiritual dimension was articulated by the co-founders of Alcoholics Anonymous who sensed from their personal experience that this was the key to recovery. Marty Mann, first woman member of A.A. and patient of Tiebout from whom he learned much about surrender writes,

The spiritual basis of A.A. actually permeates all of the foregoing steps, even for the alcoholic who doesn't think he has accepted it. For the changes in attitude which are implicit in all the above are of a spiritual nature, as well as being mental and emotional.¹⁸

Mann is suggesting theologically that God is operative in the entire process whether acknowledged as being there or not. Ultimately a new vision of who God is in relationship to human beings emerges which incorporates the images of power, justice, love and mercy.

Blum and Blum note that A.A. prides itself in effecting change not through the utilization of psychotherapy, but rather religion as a counterforce to failure and hopelessness.¹⁹ Addressing the issue of conversion or transformation more specifically, Paul Johnson says, "They are those who admitting this (addiction) have found in religious conversion a way of changing life for themselves and others whom they seek to help."²⁰

It can be noted that people in A.A. and Al-Anon who embrace this approach to life are often more vocal about their spirituality and faith in God or a 'Higher Power' than many practicing church members.

¹⁸Marty Mann, New Primer on Alcoholism (New York: Rinehart, 1958) 184-185.

¹⁹Blum and Blum, 162.

²⁰Paul E. Johnson, Psychology of Religion (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1959) 124.

This dynamic spirituality is predicated on the basis of a personal relationship with a God who delivers them and thus liberates them from the clutches of the disease.

The discussion of transformation in terms of formal theological percepts will be addressed in the chapter ten. However, a connecting point with A.A. and Al-Anon can better be made if those theological dynamics are discussed from the particular perspective of these self-help groups at this juncture.

1. Theology of Grace

Alcoholics Anonymous and Al-Anon as groups believe and practice a theology of grace in their structure and function. As has already been noted in the process of the steps, the person acknowledges the existence of a Higher Power, surrenders himself/herself to the care of that power and then attempts to live according to the will and way of God as God is understood by that person. Sobriety and sanity for the whole family system is experienced as a gracious gift. As such, transformation is not a goal towards which a person works, but acceptance of a gift which is given.

The reality of grace is repeatedly affirmed as in Bill Wilson's own story.

But my friend sat before me, and he made the point blank declaration that God had done for him what he could not do for himself. His human will had failed. Doctors had pronounced him incurable. Society was about to lock him up. Like myself, he had admitted complete defeat. Then he had, in effect, been raised from the dead, suddenly taken from the scrap heap to a level of life better than the best he had ever known!²¹

²¹Alcoholics Anonymous, 11.

Repeatedly throughout the literature the theme emerges time and time again that salvation for the alcoholic and his/her family has been accomplished by the power and grace of God.

The great fact is just this, and nothing less: That we have had deep and effective spiritual experiences which have revolutionized our whole attitude toward life, toward our fellows and toward God's universe. The central fact of our lives today is the absolute certainty that our Creator has entered into our hearts and lives in a way which is indeed miraculous. He has commenced to accomplish those things for us which we could never do by ourselves.²²

Wishing, willing, working and worrying were not sufficient, "Lack of power, that was our dilemma. We had to find a power by which we could live, and it had to be a Power greater than ourselves."²³

These self-help groups might best be characterized as groups where grace is in action. Alienation, estrangement, brokenness and despair are counteracted by acceptance, love, support and sacrificial action in behalf of others. Thus grace is more than a theological abstraction, it is concretized through the application of the principles of the program. Grace received and experienced is then translated into grace operative in behalf of others. Martin notes with reference to members of A.A., "What impressed me even more, the recovering alcoholic made good use of his experience of the grace of God."²⁴ Vernon Johnson accurately points out that the experience of grace and forgiveness is a painful process, but the key to sobriety

²²Alcoholics Anonymous, 25.

²³Alcoholics Anonymous, 44-45.

²⁴Greg Martin, Spiritus Contra Spiritum (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1977) 84.

with serenity.²⁵

Members of these groups remind themselves through their slogans that grace is preeminent even though it may not be couched in explicitly theological language. Their slogans state, 'let go and let God,' or 'live and let live' are all reminders that the person is saved by grace and lives by grace in relationship to others in the world. The fostering and practice of non-judgmental acceptance through the group process is a powerful tribute to the grace of God in action. Grace occasions transformation and grace sustains the transformation process in the lives of A.A. and Al-Anon members.

2. Theology of Hope

It has been repeatedly written that those who are trapped in the throes of alcoholism, both the afflicted and the affected are cast down into the seemingly helpless and hopeless abyss of darkness and despair. There appears to be no way out! The very presence of the group engenders hope. New members in A.A. and Al-Anon see that here people are not only surviving, but living serenely.

Hope has its origin not in the capability of people controlling their own lives, but in commending their lives to the care of God.

When we saw others solve their problems by simple reliance upon the Spirit of the Universe, we had to stop doubting the power of God. Our ideas did not work. But the God idea did.²⁶

Reliance upon self resulted in hopelessness, reliance upon God effected

²⁵Vernon Johnson, I'll Quit Tomorrow (New York: Harper & Row, 1973) 99-110.

²⁶Alcoholics Anonymous, 52.

new hope and new life. Marty Mann notes with regard to the newcomer in A.A.

Of almost equal importance to the newcomer is the obvious fact that these people are apparently enjoying their sobriety, something that he had never dreamed could be possible. Once again he thinks: If they can stay sober and enjoy it, perhaps I can too. Hope becomes a living reality to him, embodied in the presence of the A.A. members he sees and hears and meets.²⁷

The concept of hope sheds abstraction and becomes incarnationally concretized in the form of other human beings. The repeated purpose of the A.A. meetings is to gather in order to share experience, strength and hope. The process of sharing the story or saga has as its motivation the issue of hope. "Each speaker hopes that he will personify hope to some alcoholic whose past experience may have been similar to his own."²⁸ In the language of Juergen Moltmann²⁹ there is the invitation of the future which beckons the members of the group to newness of life.

For many alcoholics who contemplated terminating their miserable existence, the group becomes the first dim light at the end of the tunnel for them. As they work the program, they emerge from the depths into a bright new life and day where hope springs eternal. This experience aids in dissipating fear not only of dying, but more importantly of living.

Family members find themselves in a similar position of

²⁷Mann, 169.

²⁸Mann, 173.

²⁹Juergen Moltmann, Theology of Hope (New York: Harper & Row, 1967)

frustration and futility. The Al-Anon program provides a new vision of hope for them whether or not the practicing alcoholic abstains or not. Again the issue is one of incarnational hope as the person sees and experiences the possibility for new life as exemplified in the lives of other members.

The family system through renewed hope can image a future whereas when they were shackled in the dynamics of the disease, the future had seemingly been wrested from them. The restoration of hope is a gift of grace which is translated into reality as the family system begins to recover and reclaim its role as a functioning organism within the context of society.

3. Theology of Community

A.A. and Al-Anon represent a social solution for a social disease. Recovery occurs within the context of these respective groups as they begin to forge a sense of identity and trust as a community of caring individuals. These groups have as a positive characteristic the fact that membership is not contingent upon race, color, creed or national origin nor do they take cognizance of political, economic or social standing. Out of the pain of isolation, a new possibility and potential for relatedness in community is born. This extended quote graphically describes the experience,

We are people who normally would not mix. But there exists among us a fellowship, a friendliness, and an understanding which is indescribably wonderful. We are like the passengers of a great liner the moment after rescue from shipwreck when camaraderie, joyousness and democracy pervade the vessel from steerage to Captain's table. Unlike the feelings of the ship's passengers, however, our joy in escape from disaster does not subside as we go our individual ways. The feeling of having shared in a common peril

is one element in the powerful cement which binds us together. But that in itself would never have held us together as we are now joined.

The tremendous fact for every one of us is that we have discovered a common solution. We have a way out on which we can absolutely agree, and upon which we can join in brotherly and harmonious action.³⁰

With its Twelve Steps and its Twelve Traditions, the organizations have developed a format and plan which does not run the ordinary risks of most organizations. Internal conflict is minimized by taking cognizance of the reality of being human and guarding against involvement in concerns which would threaten the sense of community.

Ours is not the usual success story; rather it is the story of how, under God's grace, an unsuspected strength has arisen out of great weakness; of how, under threats of disunity and collapse, a world-wide unity and brotherhood have been forged.³¹

As these groups practice a spirit of tolerance, acceptance, informality and concern; there is developed a magnetic field which lures and draws people to this unique community and opens up for them a sense of relatedness and fellowship missing from their lives. Relationships replace alcohol for the practicing alcoholic; relationships replace resentment, self-pity and misery for the family member.

This does not occur overnight even as the disease did not develop instantaneously. There is a logical progression of reestablishing relationships and relearning social skills for the whole family system. These people learn a new kind of dependence and ultimately interdependence as Fox and Lyon note.

³⁰Alcoholics Anonymous, 17.

³¹Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age (New York: A.A. World Services, 1957) 79.

He can switch his dependency to this group; but if he does, it is likely that he will soon learn, instead, a more fulfilling interdependence as he works with one or two others of his group in helping to recover still another alcoholic.³²

The covenant community which is established relies exclusively upon the creative Creator who called it into existence. These people covenant together to deal with the disease of alcoholism and in this fashion acknowledge their dependence upon God and one another in their mutual quest for sobriety and sanity with serenity. This community is constituted on the basis of complete honesty. The meaning and value of honesty is immediately apparent to anyone who participates in the group process. "Honest mutual sharing for mutual strengthening is an enriching, revitalizing experience."³³ The necessity of honesty is stated quite succinctly in the Big Book.

Those who do not recover are people who cannot or will not completely give themselves to this simple program, usually men and women who are constitutionally incapable of being honest with themselves. There are such unfortunates. They are not at fault; they seem to have been born that way. They are naturally incapable of grasping and developing a manner of living which demands rigorous honesty.³⁴

Honesty engenders trust, trust creates openness to share deeply of oneself with other human beings and it is this dynamic which makes and moulds the close sense of community.

The preeminence of community and the group is reminiscent of the importance ascribed to the gathered people of God in the

³²Ruth Fox and Peter Lyon (eds.) Alcoholism (New York: Random House, 1955) 169.

³³John Keller, Ministering to the Alcoholic (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1966) 1-2.

³⁴Alcoholics Anonymous, 58.

Judaeo-Christian tradition. Corporateness takes precedence over individuality. A.A. and Al-Anon members order their lives and priorities with fidelity to the group as a determinative principle. Members of the group often place their loyalty to the group and its activities above that of their individual wants and needs. The insatiable thirst for relatedness which develops as a result of an extended period of isolation and fear is met in large measure through the communities established by these self-help groups. Help, healing and ultimately health result from the interdependent relationships of caring people.

4. Theology of Freedom

The self-help groups exemplify a theology of freedom and liberation in action. It is not only freedom from the past with all of the issues endemic to the disease, but also a promise of freedom and new life for the present and the future. This is accomplished by the power of God at work in the lives of people which enables them to embrace a radically new lifestyle.

There is freedom through forgiveness for past failures, freedom from the insatiable thirst for alcohol for the alcoholic and freedom for the family as they are liberated from the chains of a pathological family system. Freedom comes through acceptance of responsibility for one's own life and a new world view.

We are sure God wants us to be happy, joyous, and free. We cannot subscribe to the belief that this life is a vale of tears, though it once was just that for many of us. But it is clear that we made our own misery. God didn't do it. Avoid then, the deliberate

manufacture of misery, but if trouble comes, cheerfully capitalize on it as an opportunity to demonstrate His omnipotence.³⁵

David Stewart states that for the alcoholic, "What works best in fostering a desire to be sober is the promise the addict is going to be free! This makes personal freedom the main goal of recovery that endures and fosters personal growth."³⁶ For the alcoholic and the family system there is freedom through release of the past in order that the future might be embraced with its potential for growth. This is not to suggest that the transformation process is without problems or that perfection becomes a promised goal. This is most poignantly expressed in the Big Book.

No one among us has been able to maintain anything like perfect adherence to these principles. We are not saints. The point is, that we are willing to grow along spiritual lines. The principles we have set down are guides to progress. We claim spiritual progress rather than spiritual perfection.³⁷

What is promised is perceptible change in proportion to the person's being open to a new future of freedom and life. It is more than just change in the sense of altering what is or growth in the sense of enlarging upon what was; it is a transformation through substantive alteration and change of the person's total being. S/he is both being and becoming in a new sense.

We will be prepared to change, and to be changed, though we will not turn back to anything less than we are. In feeling deeply the meaning of change, we will know that to be ourselves is to become persons. It is to see, feel and live the dynamic nature of life, ceaseless change. The only unchanging thing is change itself.³⁸

³⁵Alcoholics Anonymous, 133.

³⁶Stewart, 51-52.

³⁷Alcoholics Anonymous, 60.

³⁸Stewart, 216.

A false freedom experienced by the alcoholic in addiction is exchanged for real freedom lived in relationship to God and other people. The freedom experienced by the members of Al-Anon is a healing and restorative freedom from the crippling consequences of the addicted family system.

Implicit in the theology of freedom from the past and for the future practiced in these self-help groups is the experience of serenity and joy which accompanies the transformation process. In near poetic imagery, expression of this new life of freedom carries with it its own unique kind of intoxication.

We have indulged in spiritual intoxication. Like a gaunt prospector, belt drawn in over the last ounce of food, our pick struck gold. Joy at our release from a lifetime of frustration knew no bounds.³⁹

This pervasive atmosphere of joy and freedom is infectious. It presents a viable option for those who still suffer in the bondage of an addictive system.

If newcomers could see no joy or fun in our existence, they wouldn't want it. We absolutely insist on enjoying life. We try not to indulge in cynicism over the state of the nations, nor do we carry the world's troubles on our shoulders.⁴⁰

The life of freedom for A.A. and Al-Anon members becomes a gift rather than a curse, an adventure rather than a horror story and opens up new vistas of possibility. There is more to it than simply white knuckled abstinence, there is sobriety with serenity. Stewart indicates that this new found freedom brings the gifts of grace, peace

³⁹Alcoholics Anonymous, 128-129.

⁴⁰Alcoholics Anonymous, 132.

and fellowship accompanied by the mysterious wonder of new life lived in fellowship and love with others.⁴¹ For members of A.A. and Al-Anon, the spiritual dynamic of freedom is not only appreciated from the perspective of having experienced the pain of bondage; but the depth of bondage can be realized only in the experience of freedom granted freely as a gift from God. This gift of freedom is not for self-serving, but for service to others. In Pauline language, for freedom Christ has set us free. This is nothing less than a radically new experience in existence.

5. Theology of Mission

The self-help groups of A.A. and Al-Anon have a tradition which emphatically states that as a whole the groups do not involve themselves in any kind of promotion. The basic premise is that if you want what we have, then you will do what we do and no one will coerce you to follow the program, nor can anyone work the program for you.

This posture is reminiscent of the theology of mission as conceptualized in the Old Testament. The evangelistic and proselytizing fervor is curbed in favor of a theology of mission which attracts rather than promotes. Isaiah emphatically states that when the nations of the earth see what Yahweh has done and observe in the lives of Yahweh's people what is happening, then all will come or be attracted to Mount Zion. This is not an exclusivistic theology of group identity and process which stands aloof, but one which recognizes

⁴¹Stewart, 358-359.

the genius of attraction in living out a lifestyle which is a lure to others. A.A. and Al-Anon have a low key approach and choose to demonstrate in lifestyle what they have to offer others rather than attempting to convict or convince anyone into conformity or compliance with their approach.

The members of these groups respond when called upon to render assistance and help, but even at that point the program is proffered and not provided for the person. Having developed this posture, the group grows not only quantitatively, but qualitatively without emulating the paradigm of promotion which most people have come to expect in our society. There is a silent witness of lifestyle and readiness to assume the servant role of responding to need. A.A. and Al-Anon members establish telephone networks to encourage one another in their daily lives, but also to act as resources for those outside of the group who are looking for help. Many members of both groups are available and on call twenty four hours a day to do Twelfth Step work as outlined in the last chapter.

The A.A. and Al-Anon theology of mission is not promotional, yet their very survival is contingent upon their outreach. For the alcoholic, the Big Book states, "Practical experience shows that nothing will so much insure immunity from drinking as intensive work with other alcoholics. It works when other activities fall."⁴²

The same is true for Al-Anon members who have repeatedly noted that at low points in their recovery process, they have been uplifted

⁴²Alcoholics Anonymous, 89.

by a call for help from another human being. The interconnectedness and interrelatedness of the human family is emphasized in a spirit of mutuality and trust. In the reaching out to another human being the spirit of God is present incarnationally as within the relationship the two people become available to each other. The establishment of an I-Thou relationship in the Buberian sense constitutes both the essence and the genius of a theology of mission or outreach as practiced by these two groups.

6. Theology of Ritual and Celebration

The cohesion, effectiveness and solidarity of groups is insured by rites and rituals. Arnold van Gennep has conclusively written about the manner in which rituals play a vital role in all cultural settings to perpetuate tradition or insure the transmission of truth and knowledge from one generation to another.⁴³

A.A. and Al-Anon groups likewise have developed their own significant rituals, some of which have become rather widespread and identifying marks of the organizations as a whole. Each group has and continues to develop its own personality or character through its rites, rituals and celebrations.

Attention is turned initially to the rituals of the A.A. meeting. The meeting is called to order and often the serenity prayer is recited followed by a ritualistic reading of the purpose of the program. This traditionally includes the reading of chapter five of

⁴³Arnold van Gennep, The Rites of Passage (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960)

the Big Book entitled, "How It Works."⁴⁴ The introductory ritual is a reminder of the purpose as well as the seriousness of the situation with which the participants are dealing. The format then calls for the meeting proper which takes a variety of forms. There is the 'speaker meeting' which features the exclusive story of recovery from one person's perspective. There is the 'step' meeting which focuses in on a given step of the program, its meaning and implication for members. There is the 'sharing' meeting in which members present have the opportunity, if they so choose, to share their story or a significant segment of it with the group. There is the 'special' meeting which may feature a film or some other audio or visual presentation which stimulates discussion and sharing. Most of the meetings are closed to outsiders, but periodically there is the 'open' meeting at which point other interested members of the community are invited to come, listen and learn.

The procedure is ritualized as each person involves himself/herself in a kind of terse liturgical salutation and response. The speaker says, "Hi, my name is Joe and I'm an alcoholic." The community responds by saying in unison, "Hi Joe!" This is an affirmation of the person, an awareness of incorporation in the group and the group process as well as a signal that at this point s/he as a member of the group has the floor to speak and share while others listen.

The content of the story shared varies, but the general outline is basically the same. The speaker tells about what it was like, what

⁴⁴Alcoholics Anonymous, 58-60.

happened and what it is like now in recovery. It is the story of salvation from addiction. It can be a sordid saga, but it is always told with a purpose in order that experience, strength and hope can be shared. There is usually both a fascination and an identification of those who listen in relationship to those who tell. As in the biblical tradition, it is a living story which is being passed on, a story of deliverance, freedom and new life. It is a Gospel story in that it is good news personalized in the life journey of the one who shares his/her saga. It is a story with significance which carries on the ritual and tradition as well as a witness to the passage from a drunken existence to becoming a functional person under the aegis of a Higher Power. There are no interruptions in this rite of story telling as each in turn shares his/her saga while others listen and identify.

The ritual continues often with a brief break whence the 'coffee therapy' as it has sometimes been termed commences. The members of the group are involved in significant dialogue about the meeting, themselves, the group and upcoming events. The conversation is for the most part structured ritualistically so as to relate to the A.A. experience.

There is the important ritual of 'birthdays' or 'anniversaries' often accompanied by the presentation of 'chips' designating the length of sobriety. This is an extremely important ritual as recognition is given and celebration shared around the person who has remained sober thus reinforcing his/her commitment to the program. Verbal accolades and applause accompany this ritual.

The meeting is brought to a formal close again in most instances

with a ritualized reminder of the purpose and intention of A.A. in relationship to the rest of the world. The leader usually closes by asking all (often times with hands joined) to share in repeating the Lord's Prayer, another action ritualistically adhered to by most groups. The conclusion consists of a reminder of the next meeting and other pertinent information with respect to the group and all invite each other to return. Ritual and celebration punctuate the group experience.

The parallel process of Al-Anon meetings reflects basically the same structure. The dynamics are altered only to the extent that the person sharing the story usually is not chemically dependent, but one who lives with a chemically dependent person. Ownership of complicity in the disease, acknowledgment of responsibility for one's own life, feelings and actions constitute the shared saga of people in this group. Opening and closing exercises are parallel to that of A.A. People in the group learn alternately to have compassion on, commiserate with and be confrontive of the pangs of pain which they are experiencing in their lives. Rituals of celebration and commendation center on those who exhibit change, growth and transformation in their lives. The old lifestyle begins to fade and pass as the new comes accompanied by celebration. Both groups have found a new way of life which can be ritualized and celebrated as a gift from God.

7. Theology of Love in Action

The self-help groups exemplify genuine love in action. Succinctly expressed, love is the mortar which cements together the

members of the respective fellowships. Love is not a theological abstraction nor a sentimental expression in the popular sense of the word, but rather a genuine caring which assumes many different forms.

There is a 'tough love' as it is known in A.A. and Al-Anon circles which cares enough to be confrontive in a non-judgmental way in order for a person to come to grips with his/her responsibility as a human being. It refuses to cover up or alibi for someone else's behavior because such tactics are detrimental to the person's growth and development. This kind of love employs the growth formula coined by Howard Clinebell which is: "Growth = Caring + Confrontation."⁴⁵ It is crucial that every member of the system understand the need for this kind of love. It is a clarion call to responsible living. It takes an immense amount of courage to consistently resist rescuing the person who is in trouble. To rescue is to perpetuate and reinforce self-defeating behavior, thus 'tough love' allows the person to suffer the consequences of his/her behavior.

It is love in action in that it shares freely and openly with others in the process. Stewart writes,

...in sharing our insights with one another, to respect your fellows as well as yourselves, is not only to develop a sound therapy for alcoholism. It is also to love in the best sense of the word, when to love means to foster the freedom and the artistry and personal dignity of each of you through your fellows. To love is to furnish the basis of all personal knowing, all communication enabling people to get well.⁴⁶

⁴⁵Howard J. Clinebell, Jr., Growth Counseling (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1979) 55.

⁴⁶Stewart, 333.

Love is acceptance of others as they are in order that they might be liberated to become what God has intended them to be as persons.

It is love in the sacrificial sense of the word which knows no bounds in its giving. Those involved in Twelfth Step work literally go anywhere, to anyone, at any time to assist another who still suffers the consequences of addiction. It is in the continual giving of self that the real self is born and develops. Once this giving becomes a part of the person, "Then you will know what it means to give of yourself that others may survive and rediscover life. You will learn the full meaning of 'Love thy neighbor as thyself.'"⁴⁷ It is that agape kind of love as spoken of in the New Testament which is enacted within the group and is employed in relationship to others outside of the group.

It is not only a sharing and sacrificial love, but a supportive love which shapes the character of these groups. Genuine acceptance and positive support of one another is the most evident dynamic operative. These are the best known and most effective social support systems in existence for dealing with the dynamics of addiction. The groups when functioning properly realize that they have been created by love, exist through love and serve one another with love. Love in its many shapes and forms is the prevailing motivation, dynamic, atmosphere, ethic and result of the efforts of these groups.

Engaging new participants in conversation following meetings usually results in the same comment from each, "I never have

⁴⁷Alcoholics Anonymous, 153.

experienced that much love before in my life." Or, "I had forgotten that people could love and care so much for each other."

Theologically, the love of God experienced in the lives of people becomes incarnationally the vehicle for setting in motion the transformation process in the lives of others. Love is infectious and contagious and manifests itself as the basic spiritual dynamic in the self-help groups of A.A. and Al-Anon.

H. CRITIQUE OF A.A. AND AL-ANON AS SOCIAL PARADIGMS OF RECOVERY

The success of A.A. and Al-Anon as social paradigms for recovery for the family system is well known and documented. Howard Clinebell has written, "In all the dark history of the handling of the problem of alcoholism, the brightest ray of hope and help is Alcoholics Anonymous."⁴⁸ To that statement should be added the self-help groups for members of the family as well. It is only in the transformation process of the whole family system that sobriety and sanity with serenity is possible. In view of the success stories, the groups do have their limitations and it is to these aspects that attention is now turned.

First of all, Alcoholics Anonymous and Al-Anon are self contained groups dedicated to the recovery of individuals and families from the disease of alcoholism. As such, there is no conscious attempt at working at or working for the necessary changes in the social system which create and perpetuate the disease. Traditionally these groups

⁴⁸Howard J. Clinebell, Jr., Understanding and Counseling the Alcoholic (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1968) 119.

have remained silent in the political and economic arena of life making no attempt to address the systemic issues out of which the disease emerges. While cultural attitudes and social conditions do not constitute the primary or singular reason for the problem, they are a strong contributing factor and neither of the self-help groups address those issues explicitly. The tradition of the groups enjoins anonymity at the level of the media so as not to involve the groups in controversy and perhaps create a schism because of differing opinions. The structure of the groups is not to be jeopardized, its existence and purpose take precedent over all other considerations. A prophetic voice needs to be heard addressing the political, economic and social dimensions of the issue and the members of these groups would be best informed and equipped to render that service. While the transformation of individuals and families is applauded, the disease itself will continue to assume epidemic proportions if there is not also a concomitant transformation of cultural and social attitudes toward the problem.

Secondly, the genius of this social paradigm of transformation has been closely guarded and cooperation with other self-help groups has been shunned. John Burns addresses this issue most forcefully in his book, where he suggests that there could have been a strong coalition of recovering people. Not only those addicted to alcohol, but to other substances might have had an alliance with A.A. had that been allowed to occur. Since this was not the case, other therapeutic communities were developed and were "- born while A.A.

slept."⁴⁹ He notes for example that Synanon is A.A.'s most vigorous offspring,

...but its parturition went largely unnoticed by the fellowship at large. Most AAs do not realize that Synanon is really an extension of their own movement, that its history is part of their history, and that it came into being to fill a vacuum created when AA, challenged to extend its ministry to heroin addicts, declined to do so.⁵⁰

Thus there is a kind of rigidity structurally in the self-help groups which can work to its own detriment. Whereas the more or less structured or rigid program is necessary via the steps to bring order into a chaotic life, the structural rigidity organizationally can convey an attitude of aloofness which may exacerbate organizational pride rather than fostering the quality of humility.

Thirdly, it is evident that A.A. and Al-Anon do not hold universal appeal for chemically dependent family systems. Whereas in many instances, rejection of these groups can be attributed to the people themselves who choose to reject this program of recovery; it seems that these organizations are reluctant to consider alternative possibilities. As such there is a commitment to the preservation of the past and little experimental consideration of alternative possibilities for the future. There may be more effective ways of addressing the issue of recovery, but most people in these organizations are resistant to new considerations. While one cannot argue with success as experienced in these groups, yet other creative

⁴⁹John Burns, The Answer to Addiction (New York: Harper & Row, 1975) 200.

⁵⁰Burns, 202.

options may be available for consideration if the groups would allow more permeable boundaries.

Fourthly, there is the limitation that the self-help groups can become an end in themselves. As Keller notes, "...the alcoholic may end up finding his identity in being an alcoholic instead of finding it in being a person who is an alcoholic."⁵¹ The same could be said for the members of Al-Anon. These people run the risk of establishing themselves as kind of elite outcasts who have now formed a new in-group which in turn precludes and excludes others even as others previously may have excluded them.

Whereas a radical reversal in lifestyle is important and imperative for recovery, for transformation involves a total change in attitude and action, substituting the limited social sphere of the group for the limited social contact previously afforded in the bar is very limiting. Keller again expresses this most succinctly.

Nevertheless, alcoholics need to become aware of the fact that although they have experienced a unique kind of fellowship, they were not created just for fellowship with alcoholics. They are persons in whose lives the common human problem has found expression in alcoholism. Hopefully they can be helped to see the common human problem, not just the problem of alcoholism and helped to find their way into the world of persons, not just the world of persons who are alcoholic, and into the community of the church, not just the community of alcoholics.⁵²

If thus conceived and considered, the groups can limit their participants in terms of growth and interrelatedness with other human beings. This is not the intent or purpose of the groups, but it becomes a fact of life for members of A.A. and Al-Anon.

⁵¹Keller, 60.

⁵²Keller, 61.

Finally, A.A. and Al-Anon even though not intending to be, can become for some the totality of their religious experience and understanding. Once again, Keller's insightful analysis is helpful.

Important also is the realization that A.A. is not and does not claim to be a church or a religion. This is not another 'way of salvation' that is being offered to people. Their fellowship does not exist to meet this greatest need of man. This need is to be met in the fellowship of the church, to which God has entrusted the Word and the Sacraments. A.A. is in existence to help alcoholics attain sobriety and to help bring about changes within alcoholics to assure continued sobriety. It is a 'way of salvation' from alcoholism.⁵³

Some people within the fellowship of A.A. and Al-Anon have abandoned the church entirely as a community of faith. It is a small step then to the judgmental posture of assuming and affirming that the church is superfluous and filled with hypocrites who are moralistic and judgmental. Establishing a dichotomy or suggesting that the self-help groups and the church perform the same functions are futile positions. It is not either/or but both/and as the groups and the church work for wholeness within individuals and families, but provide for and contribute to that wholeness from varying perspectives.

Keller notes this, "Strangely enough, we discover that A.A. tells us just what the church has been saying for years. The alcoholic is powerless over alcohol, and his hope is ultimately in God."⁵⁴ The parallels are obvious and important as the issue of the dynamics of transformation from a theological and psychological perspective are integrated to form a more complete picture of the recovery process.

⁵³Keller, 41.

⁵⁴Keller, 1.

PART FOUR

TRANSFORMATION - THE PERSPECTIVE OF RELIGION

CHAPTER VIII

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF RELIGION PERSPECTIVE ON CONVERSION AND TRANSFORMATION

A. INTRODUCTION

The previous two chapters have delineated in detail the social paradigm of recovery as exemplified in Alcoholics Anonymous and Al-Anon. It was repeatedly noted that the program has been called 'spiritual' and that when taken seriously has a definite and dynamic religious component to it. A critical point in the transformation process is the 'conversion experience' as Tiebout referred to it. It marks the watershed or 'turning point' in the process, but is not the total process itself. Transformation is an ongoing process with significant junctures along the way. For the alcoholic and family members, the surrender which occurs during conversion is an important dynamic. The psychology of religion provides an important perspective in understanding this dynamic.

The psychology of religion is a discipline which seeks to describe the experience of religion from a psychological perspective. As such it is a discipline which attempts to amalgamate the concerns of psychology and religion in its focus. Historically the psychology of religion has made the issue of 'conversion' a pivotal concern in its investigations. Beginning with G. Stanley Hall in 1882 and continuing down to the present time, the literature is replete with studies which have a bearing on the issue of conversion as it relates to the process of transformation. By extrapolating salient features from this discipline which impact this study, it is hoped that a contribution

from this discipline will aid in constructing a more complete picture of the theological and psychological dynamics particularly as understood in the context of the recovery from alcoholism.

B. DEFINITIONS AND UNDERSTANDING OF CONVERSION IN THE PSYCHOLOGY OF RELIGION

Scholars have suggested various definitions for 'change' or 'conversion' as it has been termed in the psychology of religion literature. Among the first to tender a definition was E.D. Starbuck who stated,

Conversion is characterized by more or less sudden changes from evil to goodness, from sinfulness to righteousness, and from indifference to spiritual insight and activity.¹

Starbuck was interested in the moral and spiritual processes operative in this phenomenon and was not primarily concerned about establishing a particular doctrine or validating any theological presuppositions.

Starbuck and others who came after him were interested in scientifically studying the conversion phenomenon particularly as it manifested itself in late 19th and early 20th century revivalism. His definition did note both the 'suddenness' of the change as well as the 'radical' aspect of the change. Theological categories were used in an attempt to explain psychological phenomena. It was Starbuck who coined the phrase 'turning point' as it relates to conversion. He equated it with the 'beginning of a new life.'²

A major contribution to the understanding of conversion was made

¹E.D. Starbuck, The Psychology of Religion (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1899) 21.

²Starbuck, 24.

by the philosopher William James who stated,

To be converted, to be regenerated, to receive grace, to experience religion, to gain assurance, are so many phrases which denote the process, gradual or sudden, by which a self hitherto divided, and consciously wrong, inferior, and unhappy, becomes unified and consciously right, superior, and happy, in consequence of its firmer hold upon religious realities.³

The concern of William James was to deal with the issue of meaning in life which went beyond the superficialities of daily living. Stewart states this with regard to the inquiry made by James,

To contact these hidden reservoirs is to reach God. A man reaches Him often in his most dire needs. The work of James touched off the hope that science and religion are one inquiry, not two in conflict with one another. This gave the early members of A.A. something to grapple with. The result was a firm belief in God, but God as each man experienced Him in his own life.⁴

Wayne Oates draws this connection between James and the work done by Harry Tiebout which was discussed in chapter four.

James furthermore presaged the work of Tiebout in his understanding of conversion in relation to the process of self-surrender. He says that self-surrender 'has been and always must be regarded as the vital turning point of the religious life, so far as the religious life is spiritual.'⁵

James introduced the observation concerning the possibility of a 'gradual' conversion. Even though he was most fascinated by the 'sudden' conversion phenomenon as he called it, he takes cognizance of the gradual dimension as well.

Another aspect of James' conceptualization which is helpful for

³William James, Varieties of Religious Experience (New York: Longman, Green, 1903) 189.

⁴David A. Stewart, Thirst for Freedom (Toronto: Musson, 1960) 136.

⁵Wayne E. Oates, "Conversion and Mental Health," Pastoral Psychology 17:166 (1966) 43.

this study is that the effectiveness of conversion was not attributed only to social influence or psychological mechanism,

...so much as to a Power beyond the appearances of life. It is the freedom that man has to exert his will in the direction of getting in touch with this Power that constitutes his 'will to believe.' A person thus encouraged to believe in himself and a divine realm at the same time can hardly keep from a respect for conversion that will enhance its likelihood of occurrence.⁶

In other words, James was willing to take seriously the influence of the power beyond the individual as a principle component in the conversion process.

In the recovery dimension from alcoholism as it is related to spiritual experience, Bill Wilson, co-founder of the Alcoholics Anonymous organization says,

Spiritual experiences, James thought, could have objective reality; almost like gifts from the blue, they could transform people. Some were sudden brilliant illuminations; others came on very gradually. Some flowed out of religious channels; others did not. But nearly all had the great common denominators of pain, suffering, calamity. Complete hopelessness and deflation at depth were almost always required to make the recipient ready.⁷

Wilson substantiates James' contention about the power outside of the self as being operative in the transformation process. He adds the noteworthy observation that nearly all experiences had a common denominator which resulted in deflation at depth which prepared the person to be open to the power from without who could make changes in the person's life.

⁶Walter Houston Clark, "William James: Contributions to the Psychology of Religious Conversion," Pastoral Psychology 16:156 (1965) 33.

⁷Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age (New York: Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, 1957) 63.

Paul Johnson concurs with Wilson's contention in isolating the crisis dimension as that which precipitates the change.

A genuine religious experience is the outcome of a crisis. Though it may occur to persons in a variety of circumstances and forms, and though we may find many preparatory steps and long-range consequences, the event of conversion comes to focus in a crisis of ultimate concern. There is in such conversion a sense of desperate conflict in which one is so involved that his whole meaning and destiny are at stake in a life-or-death, all-or-none significance. Unless a person is aware of conflict serious enough to defeat him, and unless he is concerned ultimately enough to put his life in the balance, he is not ready for conversion. If in such a crisis a person reaches out to Thou, willing to give all of himself to this relationship, and out of mingling despair and hope decides to enter a new way of life, he may be radically changed in a religious conversion.⁸

The authenticity of the experience according to Johnson can be determined. "The essential mark of authentic conversion is the completeness of devotion and transformation."⁹ This statement is reminiscent of James' contention that it was the fruits rather than the roots of conversion which ultimately authenticated the experience.

The crisis situation precipitates the process which results in what Earl H. Fergusson terms surrender. He writes,

Religious conversion, from the psychological point of view, is an abrupt, involuntary change in personality in which the subject under the pressure of resolving internal conflict or tension, surrenders the control of his life to beliefs and sentiments previously peripheral or repressed.¹⁰

Ferguson jettisons the classic distinction between sudden and gradual conversion in his schema. The sudden irruptive and disjunctive

⁸Paul Johnson, Psychology of Religion (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1959) 117.

⁹Johnson, 126.

¹⁰Earl H. Fergusson, "The Definition of Religious Conversion," Pastoral Psychology 16:166 (1966) 21.

experiences he calls conversion. The gradual assimilation of notable changes over a period of time he labels as growth.

Other writers disagree and contend that conversion is always a gradual process. The sudden and dramatic shift is a result of a long buildup of internal processes. The person may be aware of this consciously in varying degrees, but when confronted at the right moment with a crisis, the crisis event precipitates the sudden change. Conversely, the conversions which appear to be more gradual in nature are reflective of one who deals with the internal dynamics and processes as they impact his/her life at that moment. Sudden conversions are a result of an internal incubation process which comes to expression in a dramatic event. Gradual conversions are the same process except that the process itself is more externalized.

Albert I. Gordon supports the distinction just made when he writes,

Conversion is a process, continuous and ongoing. It brings about a change from one set of values to another, when old values are discarded and new goals, centered in God, become, for the convert, 'the way, the truth and the life.' Such a conversion is generally regarded as a 'religious experience,' i.e., a response to what is experienced as 'ultimate reality.'¹¹

The process of conversion is the same, even the time frame may be the same. Essentially the difference is the manner in which the person appropriates the experience for himself/herself. This is a helpful dynamic to understand given the purpose of this paper. Personality differences in essence dictate the manner in which the process will

¹¹Albert I. Gordon, The Nature of Conversion (Boston: Beacon Press, 1967) 2.

come to expression in the individual.

Allison suggests that psychodynamically the conversion process may be a means whereby personality integration takes place. This is supported by the work of V. Bailey Gillespie who suggests that personality integration is best accomplished by establishing an identity.

Whether a gradual change, a sudden emotional experience, a changing of allegiance, or a turning from self to others or God, conversion is a vital force in life. It plays a significant role in the construction of identity, pointing a life in a particular direction and giving it an aim.¹²

The person begins to responsibly relate to the realities of life. In that sense it is part and parcel of the maturation process and provides a new perspective for personal evaluation.

It becomes a new way of looking at oneself and at life, and the crisis function aids in this integration and direction. The decision gives direction, usually in a theological sense. Its content is usually of Christian tradition. The return to God is at the core.¹³

Conversion for Gillespie is more than just change, for one could change also for the worse. Rather it is change which leads to significant discovery of identity as a person, to completeness and wholeness in the healthy sense of the word as the individual returns and again relates to God.

The various definitions and their implications point to certain factors which are important for this study.

- 1) The presence of power external to the person, but operative

¹²V. Bailey Gillespie, Religious Conversion and Personal Identity (Birmingham: Religious Education Press, 1979) 36.

¹³Gillespie, 112-113.

within the person to effect positive change appears to be a common denominator in the various definitions which were considered.

2) The presence of crisis either overtly or covertly appears to be indigenous to the process. The development, timing and expression of that crisis varies with the personality of the individual.

3) A substantive change for the better is noted. Once again the time frame varies with the individual. This change could be best termed a transformation since it involves more than alteration, modification or expansion upon that which already is present.

4) A more or less longer period of preparation and incubation precedes the conversion phenomenon. There is a sense of continuity since a person remains the same person with an identifiable history of experiences, but there is also a discontinuity as life takes a radical new direction.

5) The validity and authenticity of the conversion experience is determined by most writers by its results, namely movement toward wholeness, integration and health. Consensus on the basic dynamics involved in conversion can be noted even though definitions and time frames differ. A consideration of the nature of the event becomes the next logical category for consideration.

C. THE SPIRITUAL DIMENSION OF THE PHENOMENON

Important in this study is lifting up the 'spiritual' dimension of transformation in recovery from alcoholism which is the conversion event itself. Gillespie writes,

The event itself is decisive for it is a personal event, at the core of man's being in that it changes him so drastically. Many may be

confronted with ultimate decisions many times, yet perhaps may not acknowledge it or be affected by it. But religious conversion experience asserts a decisiveness about the encounter.¹⁴

The decisiveness of the encounter is that it involves more than just psychic reorientation, it is as Tillich would characterize it, a relationship with the Ultimate. It is in relationship to the Ultimate, to God, that peace can be found through the conversion experience. J. Kildahl contends that the realization of peace and wholeness is uniform in the experience and that it cuts across the grain of cultural and ideological differences.¹⁵

Discussion in the literature often centers around the issue of 'religious conversion' as opposed to 'conversion' which may not have religious implications. Leon Saltzman notes,

Religious conversion is a specific instance of the general principle of change in the process of human adaptation. Conversion is a generic term for change and generally implies a drastic alteration of a former state....Conversion simply means change; however, in theological terms it has been used in a special sense to imply a marked alteration of one's spiritual state through a superior power, generally meaning a Godhead. It is a development which implies some spiritual or mystical significance.¹⁶

Saltzman acknowledges this distinction, but goes on to say that even the so-called religious conversions may be due to dynamics other than those which are termed as spiritual.

In discussing the specifically religious aspect of this phenomenon, it must be stated first of all that the uniqueness of the

¹⁴Gillespie, 56-57.

¹⁵John P. Kildahl, "The Personalities of Sudden Religious Converts," Pastoral Psychology 16:156 (1965) 42-43.

¹⁶Leon Saltzman, "Types of Religious Conversion," Pastoral Psychology 17:166 (1966) 10.

'God' dimension is a faith assumption and can neither be contested nor verified on the basis of empirical study. The faith perspective assumes intentional mention of the transcendent dimension as not only indigenous, but central to the phenomenon. Since the transformation phenomenon as it is being addressed in this paper is inclusive of a transcendent dimension as central to the recovery process, it would be included under the category of 'religious conversion' as designated by the psychology of religion.

Secondly, it has been previously noted that change is not always for the better. For the purposes of this discussion, conversion will be considered as that event which precipitates changes which contribute positively to the physical, emotional and spiritual well being of a person.

The psychology of religion has traditionally divided the process of conversion into three distinct phases. In order to gain insights for this study, consideration is given to these successive stages.

D. PRE-CONVERSION DYNAMICS

Psychology of religion seeks to investigate prevailing dynamics operative in the individual prior to the conversion event or experience. Isolation and articulation of these dynamics varies with the investigator, but certain principles come to the fore as important for this study.

1. A Dis-ease with Life

W.H. Clark notes this uncomfortableness with life and describes

its origin theologically.

While this unrest may be in varying degrees artificially stimulated, it nevertheless often arises from a certain measure of insight into one's soul and a sense of the great gap that inevitably exists between a presumably religious person and the God he worships.¹⁷

The sensation of sin, moral failure, depression, fear of death, hell, God and existential dread are theological images and characterizations of the feelings of the person prior to conversion.

Leon Saltzman in his studies pushes the concept of unrest much further in noting the presence of intense negative feelings.

It is clear that hatred, resentment, and hostile, destructive attitudes seem, in each of the cases described, to have been involved in the preconversion experiences. While many observers have noted these emotions, they have not seen them as the focus of the preconversion struggle, nor have they quite seen conversion itself as an attempt to deal with them. Pratt, James, and Starbuck all see conversion as the result of an intense struggle within one's self, but none of them recognizes the forces of hatred operating in the struggle.¹⁸

This is an important discovery as the dynamics of hatred, resentment and anger are indigenous to those afflicted and affected by alcoholism. Allison states that often there can be alterations in sensory experience which accompanies the sense of dis-ease.

Moreover, we have seen how alterations in sensory experience stimulate conversion phenomena and how emotional crisis, upheaval, and initial disorganization are necessary components of the process which leads to personality reorganization.¹⁹

The dis-ease of the human situation produces a sense of fragmentation and vulnerability in the face of reality. Religious

¹⁷Walter Houston Clark, The Psychology of Religion (New York: Macmillan, 1958) 193-194.

¹⁸Saltzman, 17.

¹⁹Joel Allison, "Recent Empirical Studies of Religious Conversion Experiences," Pastoral Psychology 17:166 (1966) 32.

conversion is seen as one way in which this crisis and sensation of a fractionalized existence can be addressed. It represents a "...reintegration of the ego's defense systems,...When the solution comes, there is a sense of well-being, elation and understanding."²⁰

Kildahl suggests that there is a social dimension to the feeling of dis-ease which leads to conversion.

The sense of social failure is the most prominent, and the conversion offers a new and better adaptation of having a relationship with people. Thereby, and for the time being, the sense of isolation disappears.²¹

Another dynamic which is operative in the pre-conversion state in addition to a dis-ease with life is...

2. Openness and Flexibility

Dis-ease does not necessarily result in a desire to change the situation since change evokes its own kind of resistance. Gillespie takes this important dynamic into account indicating that there is some consensus regarding situations which preclude the possibility of conversion.

For example, most authorities agree that it is indifference which best prevents the conversion. A policy of total noncooperation, detachment, and humor seems to be the best defense against induced change, for a lack of involvement avoids commitment.²²

Candidates for conversion are, according to Allison, "...more receptive to new information and arguments than a more rigid and closed

²¹Kildahl, 43.

²²Gillespie, 94.

system.²³

Suggestibility has been isolated as a second prime factor in the person before the conversion phenomenon is apt to occur. An important consideration then becomes the manner in which the person reaches such a state of suggestibility or openness. In this study it has been noted that resistance, denial, pride and anger are dynamics which mitigate against flexibility and openness and the possibility for change.

William Sargant in his extensive study of psychic change from the negative perspective of mind control states that there is a systematic attempt to increase suggestibility through the increase of stress.

The immediate affect of such treatment is usually to impair judgment and increase suggestibility; and though when the tension is removed the suggestibility likewise diminishes, yet ideas implanted while it lasted may remain.²⁴

The precipitation of some kind of crisis renders the person psychically vulnerable and emotionally more susceptible. At this juncture the motivation for precipitation of a crisis is a crucial consideration. Gillespie states that,

Suggestibility is the product of many things. Group pressure, social pressure, style of meeting, concept of belief, intentional manipulation, subtle coercion and exploitation all lend to suggestibility.²⁵

J. Kildahl quoting George A. Coe adds a third consideration in this summary statement regarding the preconversion condition.

²³Allison, 24.

²⁴William Sargant, Battle for the Mind (Garden City: Doubleday, 1957) 92.

²⁵Gillespie, 95.

It has been shown that three sets of factors favor the attainment of a striking religious transformation: The temperment factor, the factor of expectancy, and the tendency to automatism and passive suggestibility.²⁶

The expectancy factor does not appear to play as great a role in the preconversion experience of those recovering from alcoholism as the other two factors. The sense of dis-ease and a crisis which aids in cracking the seemingly impenetrable walls of resistance can set the stage for the conversion experience.

E. CONVERSION PHENOMENA

Traditionally within the psychology of religion, as has been noted earlier, a distinction was made between the gradual and sudden conversion phenomena. Whereas this has been a convenient distinction to describe the observable phenomenon of change, it may in fact be, as suggested earlier, two different manifestations of the same process. Gillespie's analysis seems accurate, "No real turning point is without antecedents, such as dissatisfaction with the status quo or lure from an ideal."²⁷ The individual who experiences conversion may not be cognizant of all the preliminary preparations nor necessarily conscious of the importance of past events. However, each human being is a product of the past as it comes to shape the present.

By way of illustration, one could use the biblical paradigm of Paul which will be addressed in the next chapter. It seems reasonable to assume that the experience as recorded in Acts 9 had

²⁶Kildahl, 38-39.

²⁷Gillespie, 42.

identifiable antecedents. His exposure to the long narration of Stephen in Acts 7, his participation in Stephen's martyrdom, his observation of the equanimity with which Stephen faced death and other such factors played a significant role. Paul's own personal reflection concerning what was transpiring in his own life can be conjectured as another component in the process which led to the cataclysmic experience on the road to Damascus.

Access to the inner consciousness of people and the subliminal forces at work is not always available nor scientifically demonstrable. The temperament of the person, the social and cultural milieu, the intensity of the situation are all determining factors as well as the realization of conflict and tension. Allison states,

To a much greater degree than subjects without conversions, the conversion subjects show a striking tension between strength and weakness, being on top and being on the bottom, rising and sinking, fearfulness and fearlessness, intactness and fragmentation. This tension is likely to reflect the predominance in their psychological make-up of major issues around passivity, helplessness, and weakness vs. strength, powers, and fearlessness.²⁸

Ambivalence and conflict in the personality can be the seedbed out of which springs the experience of conversion.

Significant in the conversion phenomenon itself is the unanimity of witness from the literature which lifts up the 'surrender' motif as being indigenous to the experience. James B. Pratt's analysis of Leuba's work from 1908 is revealing of this aspect. Even though Leuba from his naturalistic perspective ruled out the working of any

²⁸Joel Allison, "Religious Conversion: Regression and Progression in an Adolescent Experience," in John R. Tisdale (ed.) Growing Edges in the Psychology of Religion (Chicago: Nelson-Hall, 1980) 170.

supernatural power in the process, nevertheless according to Pratt this significant observation is noted.

...he described the mental condition of the enthusiastic believer (the 'faith state'), showed the necessity of self surrender as a precondition for conversion, and the sudden and passive nature of the transition when it finally came; and thus displayed the psychological basis for the Christian doctrines of faith, justification, pardon, etc.²⁹

If dis-ease with life which ultimately leads to a crisis is a precondition for the conversion experience to occur, then the 'surrender' or 'giving in' process represents a resolution of the crisis.

This last factor of self-surrender is an important experiential factor in the experience. This 'giving up' and final choice is the event that resolves the crisis. The decision to change is significant, then, to the release of the crisis and to complete conversion.³⁰

It seems preferable to use the phrase 'giving in' rather than 'giving up' which carries a note of fatalistic resignation. Gillespie brings to the discussion the theological dimension which becomes evident in the psychological description of what occurs.

The sense of giving up has been equated with the form of submitting to the authority, interpreted as God....The self-surrender is brought on by the feeling of conviction of sin. Up to this point the person may be aware of his feelings exhibited in the preconversion state, those of incompleteness, doubt, alienation, restlessness, and anxiety. When he realizes that he is convicted of sin, or simply responsible himself for himself and in his helplessness, stands alone before divine presence, his being suffers and this suffering is conviction of sin; the release is brought about by self-surrender.³¹

²⁹James B. Pratt, "The Psychology of Religion," in Orlo Strunk, Jr. (ed.) Readings in the Psychology of Religion (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1959) 19.

³⁰Gillespie, 65.

³¹Gillespie, 65.

Furthermore, Gillespie notes that there is, "...always conviction, self-surrender and crisis...after the crisis comes a moment of turning."³²

The cauldron of conflicts within the person culminates in a crisis which either cataclysmically or systematically results in a 'turning about' of that person's life. The manifestation of resultant change in terms of degree as well as the time frame for that change is determined in large part by the temperament of the individual himself/herself. Sudden change and gradual change are seen as the same process with varying time increments and varying degrees of observable change contingent on the person and the intensity of the situation.

F. POST-CONVERSION SITUATION

As noted earlier, the transformation experience is authenticated by the manifest changes in attitude and behavior towards health, integration and growth. "There is in conversion experience a perceived 'confrontation' and a resultant intense commitment to an ethical, creedal, or ideological framework. Growth is usually the result."³³

James calls the resultant resolution of stress a 'state of assurance' rather than a 'faith' state. Central to the experience was the loss of all worry, a sense of ultimate well-being, peace, harmony, the willingness to be, even though outer conditions should remain the same. A new certainty of God's grace ensued and a passion of willingness of acquiescence, of admiration followed.³⁴

There is a positive reorientation towards life and a concomitant to a

³²Gillespie, 66.

³³Gillespie, 53.

³⁴Gillespie, 67.

lifestyle which demonstrates a dramatic shift. The change is more than in isolated instances and select occasions, it represents a structural change in one's total disposition towards life. It affects individuals both on the conscious as well as the unconscious level. Translated into the divine-human encounter, Allison makes this observation from a case study.

After his conversion, P (the symbol used for the person) experienced a greater sense of responsibility ('I'm not the center of the universe'), a greater sense of freedom at the same time ('I belong to God, not to man'), a feeling of being released to a certain extent from the burden of guilt, and a feeling of being less bound by the world.³⁵

The change of lifestyle is in and of itself a crisis since deeply ingrained patterns are not easily revamped.

The resolution of the crisis, or the solution of the struggle between the higher and lower parts of man's nature, using theological language, is the endeavor on the part of the convert to make the new ideology, or concepts, or way of life his very own. This may be contrary to his habit patterns and life style and this precipitates the struggle and crisis. Cutten suggests that in some, rather than a sense of sin before surrender, the term of conviction should be used to describe this feeling attitude.³⁶

This reality fits very well in describing the transformation process in the recovery from alcoholism. As has already been noted in earlier chapters, the persistence of deeply ingrained patterns of behavior in the family system are difficult to eradicate. The new way of life must become part and parcel of the recovering individual as well as becoming a part of the very fabric of the family.

The new way of life has wider implications than that of the

³⁵Allison, "Religious Conversion," 170.

³⁶Gillespie, 66-67.

nuclear family or significant other persons. The person has a sense of fitting into the total schema of the whole universe.

Religious conversional change finds man in a new 'way,' when he 'fits' in God's plan, and identity change is in the experiencing of a new sense of integrity by knowing one has chosen right and is complete. He perceives its 'rightness' through the mirrors of others in role response. The former may proceed from the latter.³⁷

Gillespie has as a primary focus in his work and research the resultant sense of personal identity which comes as a result of a conversion experience. He distinguishes between the conversion experience which leads to identity formation and that which is primarily 'religious' in nature, though the two have much in common.

In identity experience and religious conversion experience there is an intensity of feelings towards commitment. The identity function of religious conversion experience sends the individual through strong feelings of anxiety or confusion, of giving up, or surrender to ultimates. After the crisis is over, tension is released and feelings of unity are begun. The resulting sense of commitment is usually to something new. For identity experience alone, it may be in the form of an intensely committed belief in oneself, while in religious-identity-conversions, commitment to God is produced. The deep commitment is extant in both.³⁸

Since the process of transformation in the recovery from alcoholism would come under the category of 'religious' experience in Gillespie's terms, then the subsequent effects and dispositions should parallel those which he has established. He notes the presence of a power outside of oneself and the creation of new hope.

Something or someone outside himself is presented as being available, and hope is encouraged. Religious conversion has implicit within its nature an ideological framework and integral to this framework is 'hope.' By accepting the others as being able to

³⁷Gillespie, 188.

³⁸Gillespie, 192.

sustain you and solve the dilemmas of life, hope becomes a factor of consciousness.³⁹

This new meaning in life is something which "...reaches out beyond the now and points to the future, as Moltmann suggests."⁴⁰

Finally an affirmation that religious conversion brings with it a new and creative posture towards life.

Religious conversion provides a new and unusual opportunity to deal with life in a fresh and creative way, and therefore the religious conversion experience has as its prime function a resultant sense of wholeness and continuity with life.⁴¹

G. SUMMARY

The studies in the psychology of religion aid in descriptively articulating what occurs in people when a 'conversion' is experienced.

The dis-ease or unrest is present, the advent of a crisis which precipitates a dramatic change and a radical reversal in lifestyle. Many writers in the psychology of religion give credence to the dimension of power coming to the person from the outside, but this power cannot be defined nor scientifically investigated since it is beyond the realm of empirical investigation. The presence of the 'surrender' phenomenon accompanied by a new sense of hope, creativity, vitality and new life all ring familiar as terms which are parallel to the recovery process as it has been previously discussed.

The psychology of religion as a discipline is an invaluable tool in the study of the transformation process. There are, however, some

³⁹Gillespie, 195.

⁴⁰Gillespie, 204.

⁴¹Gillespie, 197.

obvious shortcomings when one considers the topic only from this perspective.

First of all, there is no way of empirically verifying the genesis of the motivation for change. As an empirical science, its investigations are limited to the plane of observable phenomena. The discipline cannot and does not claim to be able to measure or determine the nature of unobservable phenomena which religion calls the activity of God in the lives of human beings. Definite self-imposed parameters circumscribe the study because of its nature as a scientific endeavor.

Secondly, the psychology of religion addresses most markedly the discontinuity of the newly converted person from the past life. It describes the manifest changes in the individual brought about by the conversion experience in detail. The literature does not adequately address the other aspect of the situation, namely the continuous dimension of the person. How is the person, though markedly changed, still the same person as existed before the radical reversal in lifestyle?

Thirdly, the implicit assumption that there is a dichotomy with respect to the processes of change or conversion is an inherent weakness. The assumption seems to be that a psychological description is possible without taking cognizance of the spiritual dimension or that the divine in this activity is not to be taken seriously since it is not empirically verifiable. Maintaining purity of process in terms of research establishes parameters and limits if not closes the investigation at that point. The fact that a Divine Being could be operative both from without as well as from within the person through

the processes of change is no more than a conjectured possibility.

Despite the aforementioned shortcomings of the psychology of religion as a discipline, it performs a vital function in substantiating from an empirical perspective many of the psychological dynamics of change. Psychology of religion provides yet another perspective on the issue of transformation, particularly as it articulates the nature and experience of the conversion event as the 'turning point.' It verifies the experience through a descriptive analysis of the dynamics, taking cognizance of the importance of the events leading up to the conversion as well as the events and disposition of the individual following the conversion experience. The more recent literature in the field aids in substantiating the processive nature of transformation as suggested in this dissertation.

CHAPTER IX

SAUL/PAUL - A BIBLICAL PARADIGM OF TRANSFORMATION

A. INTRODUCTION

The phenomenon of transformation has been considered from varying perspectives in this dissertation. Part One dealt with the need for transformation in the alcoholic and his/her family system. The theoretical groundwork of Harry Tiebout was then considered in Part Two. Part Three contained an in-depth analysis of the theological and psychological dynamics operative in the self-help groups. Chapter eight was an explication of the psychology of religion as a discipline which seeks to describe religious experience from a psychological perspective and the contribution which this effort makes to an understanding of conversion in the context of the transformation process.

Methodologically the approach has been to describe the phenomenon of addiction and the dynamics of recovery from a psycho-social perspective with theological implications and overtones. Using the psychology of religion as a bridge discipline between psychology and theology, attention is now turned to approaching the issue from a theological perspective beginning with a biblical paradigm.

The Judaeo-Christian heritage is a story of God's transforming power as it becomes operative in the lives of human beings. Various examples could be cited from the Old and New Testament which would exemplify and illustrate the transformation process. Perhaps the most dramatic and well known story of transformation involves that of the

New Testament figure, Saul of Tarsus, who provides a biblical paradigm of transformation in his life and writing. This chapter will be devoted to addressing the issue transformation from the Pauline perspective to note the dynamics of that process in the dramatic story of this biblical figure and writer.

B. BIBLICAL BACKGROUND

The story line of the New Testament personage, Saul of Tarsus, a Diasporan Jew, is picked up in the Lukan account of his presence at the stoning of Stephen in Acts 8:1. His devastating assault on the young Christian church is noted by this reference, "But Saul laid waste the church, and entering house after house, he dragged off men and women and committed them to prison." (Acts 8:3) The narrative of his escapades is picked up again in Acts 9:1-2 which reads,

But Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest and asked him for letters to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to the Way, men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.

The ravenous and rapacious reputation of Saul is substantiated by his own confession in his letter to the Galatians.

For you have heard of my former life in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God violently and tried to destroy it; and I advanced in Judaism beyond many of my own age among my people, so extremely zealous was I for the traditions of my fathers. (Galatians 1:13-14)

It is important to note that the motivation for his actions is attributed to his zealousness, fidelity and dedication to the traditions of his religious faith. He saw the new upstart religious band known as members of the "Way" as a threat to his own tradition. Destruction and annihilation of Christians was interpreted by Saul as the will of God and evidence of his indefatigable loyalty to Judaism.

An event of monumental personal proportions and impact occurred for this man which revolutionized and transformed his life. The exact nature of this event is unclear from the biblical narrative as four accounts are provided.

The first three are tendered by the evangelist Luke in the Book of Acts as written in Acts 9:3-19, Acts 22:3-16 and Acts 26:9-18. It is recognized that these accounts are a secondary source which are later than Paul's own account as recorded in his epistle to the Galatians. The accounts in Acts are related in the third person by the evangelist as though describing the incident. The later two are couched in the form of personal delivery by Saul, now renamed Paul, who makes a personal defense of himself before the Jews in Jerusalem (Acts 22) and before King Agrippa (Acts 26). Paul's own account already cited in Galatians 1:13-17 is less detailed.

Historical speculation is rampant with regard to the nature of this event in the life of Saul of Tarsus. William Sargant refers to the event as a conversion experience and states,

The case of Saul on the road to Damascus confirms our finding: that anger may be no less powerful an emotion than fear in bringing about sudden conversion to beliefs which exactly contradict beliefs previously held.¹

Sargant is employing psychological categories to explain the phenomenon and in a priori fashion makes the assumption that 'anger' was the dominant emotion in Saul which precipitated this event.

Guenther Bornkamm argues the case differently when seeking to find an explanation or cause. In an extended, but notable quote, he states,

¹William Sargant, Battle for the Mind (New York: Harper & Row, 1959) 183.

In retrospect, a very obvious question is prompted: What prepared the way for Paul's conversion and what actually brought it about? In positive terms, the only simple answer is that as a result of arguments with the Hellenistic Christians in Damascus and elsewhere, whom he had originally hated and persecuted, it suddenly dawned on him who this Jesus really was whom hitherto he had regarded as a destroyer of the most sacred foundation of the Jewish faith and whom it had been right to crucify. He realized too, the significance of Jesus' mission and death both for himself and for the world. We may be quite sure that this question, suggested by the faith and witness of Jesus' followers, had its effect on him and in him.²

Rather than employing psychological categories as did Sargant, Bornkamm interprets the event theologically and states with regard to both the Lukan and Pauline accounts that,

Common to both are God's overcoming of the man whose impassioned zeal for the Jewish faith made him a persecutor of Christ and His church: it was not therefore the conversion of a penitent sinner. Both sources agree that with sovereign authority the exalted Lord made the persecutor into his witness.³

Bornkamm further suggests that it may be fortunate and significant that more is not said about the event and its meaning for Saul of Tarsus.

...Luke knows nothing of what Paul himself says was the decisive factor in his conversion - and here the theological differences are at their deepest. To the end of his life Luke's Paul continues to be an orthodox Jew and Pharisee; for Christ's sake the real Paul gave up the Law as a means of salvation.

Paul himself has little to say about his conversion and call, and when he does mention them it is with reserve. But we can now see that this is not something to deplore. The power of the concern for the gospel which lighted upon Paul and became his own is also revealed in the way in which he speaks of his conversion. This again confirms what for him the one thing of importance was the gospel he was given, and not his own person.⁴

Krister Stendahl in examining the biblical witness and context contends that the usage of the word conversion is inappropriate when

²Guenther Bornkamm, Paul (New York: Harper & Row, 1971) 23.

³Bornkamm, 24.

⁴Bornkamm, 25.

referring to this event in the life of Paul. He feels that the usage of such a word is an imposition upon the meaning of the event.

It thus becomes clear that the usual conversion model of Paul the Jew who gives up his former faith to become a Christian is not the model of Paul but of ours. Rather, his call brings him to a new understanding of his mission, a new understanding of the law which is otherwise an obstacle to the Gentiles.⁵

Stendahl elucidates his position by stating that Paul's experience is really comparable to the 'call' of Isaiah, Jeremiah and others of the prophets to a specific vocation of mission. He says, "It is a call to mission, rather than a conversion. And this call is the greater since it is the persecutor who becomes the apostle."⁶

Purdy likewise notes that the traditional meaning of the word conversion does not apply to Paul. He was not changed from a morally bad to a morally good person, nor did he in essence change from one religion to another for Paul saw Christianity as the fulfillment and not the abrogation of Judaism. Paul himself interprets the experience theologically.

Paul presents his experience as the act of God, penetrating, indeed, to the innermost core of his being, but inexplicable humanly speaking, and to be ascribed to the unmerited favor, the grace, of God.⁷

Significant in this discussion is the fact that all writers agree that there was an observable transformation in the attitude and behavior of this man from Tarsus.

⁵Krister Stendahl, Paul Among Jews and Gentiles (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976) 9.

⁶Stendahl, 10-11.

⁷A.C. Purdy, "Paul the Apostle," in The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1962) III, 685.

In the ancient world a substantive change in nature was often accompanied by a change in name. The designation of Saul of Tarsus as Paul the Apostle takes place in Acts 13:9, however, this shift is made without explanation as to the reason for the change. It could merely represent the fact that movement is now from the Jewish world where the name Saul would be used (Rom. 11:1 and Phil. 3:5) to the Hellenistic world where Paul (a Roman name) would seem more appropriate. It could also be postulated that the name change was intentional to mark a substantive change in the person of Paul.

Arthur Darby Nock prefers to use the word conversion in relationship to Paul, but uses it in the sense of radical reversal in lifestyle and hence as transformation.

For him (Paul) to become a Christian meant in the first instance a complete change of face. It is the first conversion to Christianity of which we have knowledge. He brought to it not merely a fresh enthusiasm but also an imperious inner need to discover an interpretation and reconciliation of the old and the new in his religious life.⁸

A.C. Purdy succinctly summarizes the nature of the event which parallels the understanding put forth in this paper. He writes,

'Conversion' is a convenient word for Paul's transformation, although Paul himself calls it a revelation (Gal. 1:16), a new creation (II Cor. 5:17), an appearance (I Cor. 15:8). It did mean a radical about-face in his attitude toward the followers of Jesus, on the one hand, and in his estimate of the Jewish law, on the other.⁹

Thus for Paul there is a radical reversal in lifestyle, a reversal which was precipitated by a crisis which Paul interpreted as

⁸Arthur Darby Nock, Conversion (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1933) 191.

⁹Purdy, III, 684.

divine intervention into his life. The biblical witness indicates an observable substantive change occurring in Paul's attitude and actions. This was a pivotal event or 'turning point' in his life which led to a continuing experience of transformation in his life and work. The persecutor becomes the propagator and the church's adversary becomes its advocate. The antagonist turned protagonist is a profound saga of conflict, intensity and struggle as Paul comes to grips with the meaning of life itself.

C. PAUL'S USAGE OF "TRANSFORMATION"

Paul's theology of transformation is more implicit than explicit in his writings. However, on two occasions he uses the word *μεταμορφῆν* in his writings which gives expression to his understanding of transformation.

1. Romans 12:2

A translation of this verse might read as follows:

Do not be conformed (*συσχηματίσεσθε*) to this age (*τῷ αἰῶνι τούτῳ*) but be transformed (*μεταμορφώσεσθε*) by the renewal (*τῇ ἀνακαινώσει*) of mind, (Some textual variants say 'your' mind), in order that you might discover (*δοκιμάσειν*) what God's will is, the good and acceptable (*εὐάρεστον* - could also be translated as 'pleasing') and perfect.

Contextually this verse is set between Paul's agonizing quandry concerning the fate of the Jews, the chosen of God and Paul's own people, and the succeeding verses which articulate the gifts and responsibilities of the Body of Christ, the Church. Paul is writing

about the Gospel imperative of consecrating one's life to God who has accomplished redemption for humankind. He sees the cross as the transitional event between the old and the new age which has been inaugurated in the life, death and resurrection of Christ. The new life is not to be lived in conformity with the old age which has passed away, but in transformed fashion with the new age which has just come to pass.

The evidence of the reality of the new age is seen in the $\tau\eta\ \acute{\alpha}\nu\alpha\kappa\alpha\iota\nu\acute{\omega}\sigma\epsilon\iota\ \tau\omicron\upsilon\ \nu\omicron\acute{o}\varsigma$. The verb form is used by Paul in the passive and is "...figurative of the spiritual rebirth of the Christian."¹⁰ (Note also II Cor. 4:16 and Col. 3:10) It is used in the pastoral epistle of Titus (3:5) to speak of the renewal of the spirit rather than the mind. An extra-biblical reference in the Vision of Hermas 3, 8, and 9, has reference to the imparting of a new spirit.¹¹

The implication is that transformation involves a renewal, a reconstituted mind which issues in a concomitant transformation of attitude and lifestyle for the one who is a partaker of this new age. This process is brought about by the activity of God's Spirit entering into the human drama. The renewed mind is then capable of discovering what the will of God is and therefore that which is good, pleasing and perfect. Once this transformation process has been set in motion, the participant in the new age takes on his/her role in the community of

¹⁰William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1952) 55.

¹¹Arndt and Gingrich, 55.

the faithful as Paul delineates in the rest of the chapter. Transformation is not a privatized experience devoid of either communal or ethical consequences. Rather it is a process which revolutionizes life so that love becomes genuine (Romans 12:9) in relationship to others and the world. Paul emphasizes these twin foci in chapter twelve. Genuine love for others in the context of the fellowship is demonstrated in the transformed life by the utilization of the gifts granted to the members of the community. (Romans 12:3-13) Genuine love for the world resulting from the transformed life revolutionizes the customary norms of behavior in relationship to the rest of the world. (Romans 12:14-21) This passage suggests more than change or alteration of the status quo, it involves a transformation of the person and his/her attitudes and lifestyle.

2. II Corinthians 3:18

A second usage of *μεταμορφεῖν* occurs in II Corinthians 3:18. Paul is contrasting the Mosaic covenant with the new covenant mediated by Christ through the Spirit. The Pauline conclusion is that the old covenant of the letter kills, but the new covenant in the Spirit gives life. (II Corinthians 3:6) In terms of context, at this juncture the relationship between Paul and the Corinthian congregation was somewhat delicate. (II Corinthians 1:23-2:11) He proposes to put this painful relationship behind them and pursue the ministry of the new covenant entrusted to them. The superiority of this new covenant over the old is well argued and attested from Paul's vantage point in the initial part of chapter three. The chapter then moves to a

doxological crescendo in the last two verses. Verse seventeen affirms the reality of freedom through the Spirit. Verse eighteen describes the transformation which results from this freedom.

A translation of verse eighteen might read:

We all* with unveiled face are reflecting (perfect passive participle indicates present result of a past action) the glory of the Lord. We are being transformed into his image from glory into glory** just as from the Lord Spirit***.

* The $\pi\alpha\upsilon\tau\epsilon\varsigma$ is textually omitted in P46, m, Or/Aug, but does not constitute sufficient weight to be omitted from the text.

** The RSV renders this "...are being changed into his likeness from one degree of glory to another;..."

***The RSV interpretatively reads, "...for this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit."

As a result of the past action of God, the believing community is now reflecting the glory of the Lord. The verb $\kappa\alpha\tau\omicron\pi\tau\acute{\rho}\iota\varsigma\epsilon\iota\nu$ has the sense of reflecting what is seen in a mirror. The lexicon notes that it, "...occurs once in our literature, in the middle, probably in the meaning: look at something as in a mirror, contemplate something."¹²

There is also a substitutionary textual variant of using the first person plural, present indicative middle of $\kappa\alpha\tau\omicron\pi\tau\acute{\rho}\iota\varsigma\epsilon\iota\nu$ in P⁴⁶ (33 Or^{Pt}), but this does not substantially change the meaning of the text and likely reflects the $\eta\mu\epsilon\iota\varsigma$ used in the initial part of verse eighteen. A second substitutionary variant is noted in the form of $\mu\epsilon\tau\alpha\mu\omicron\rho\phi\epsilon\iota\nu$ which is found in participial form in P⁴⁶, A and Or^{Pt} rather than the first person plural as in the

¹²Arndt and Gingrich, 425-526.

text. The variant juxtaposes the verbs in terms of their form, but does not significantly alter the translation or the exegesis. The final textual variant καθώστερ is used in some manuscripts adverbially and means 'as' or 'just as.'

Exegetically, transformation is accomplished by the spirit of Christ through the new covenant and cannot be attributed to the efforts or the ingenuity of humankind.

In this passage Paul is more explicit about the creative power of the Spirit as the originator of the transformation process. The passage does not suggest a kind of incremental process of being transformed from one degree of glory to a higher degree, but rather suggests a processive and dynamic force which is operative in life as the faithful place themselves under the aegis of the Spirit.

For Paul, the power of God and the righteousness of God have been made manifest in the death and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth. Those who are members of the Body of Christ, those who are ἐν Χριστῷ now participate in the transformation event and thus are made new.

Once again it is noteworthy that this is not a privatized process, but rather occurs for the sake of ministry. (II Corinthians 4:1ff) It is the reality of the transcendent and transforming power of God (II Cor. 4:7) which enables Paul to endure the exigencies of life in carrying out the ministry. (II Cor. 4:8-18)

Explicit utilization of the verb translated "transform" is limited to these two passages in the Pauline literature. However, the dynamic is implicitly present in the images which Paul selects to communicate the reality of this process in the lives of people.

D. IMAGES OF TRANSFORMATION IN PAUL

The imagery which the Apostle Paul uses in expressing the reality of transformation is not novel nor necessarily indigenous to his thought alone. These images are used throughout Scripture and in other expressions of religion outside of the Judaeo-Christian context. It is noteworthy, however, that the images are expressed in dialectical fashion. This dialectical pairing gives expression to the radical and revolutionary nature of the transformation process. Five of the major or principle images have been lifted out of the epistles which are considered by scholarship to be genuinely Pauline. Supporting evidence and examples from Ephesians and Colossians is also introduced, both of which reflect Pauline influence if not Pauline authorship.

1. Death - Life

Perhaps the most pervasive imagery utilized by Paul employs the sharpest of all contrasts, namely death and life. Death is used by Paul in a two-fold manner metaphorically.

In the first place, it represents existence lived apart from God, sometimes expressed as life *ἐν τῇ σαρκί* as in Romans 7:5-6. This is the untransformed life lived in the flesh which reaps the fruit of the flesh, namely death. This motif is picked up and elaborated upon both in Ephesians 2:1-5 and Colossians 2:13-14. This symbol of death used both explicitly and implicitly by Paul is representative of non-being, for apart from God there is not authentic existence.

Death is also used as a metaphor for the initial stage in the

transformation process to life. In Romans 6:3-4, the sacramental ritual of baptism becomes the vehicle whereby life emerges out of death. Transformation is from an unregenerate state to a new existence for those who are *ἐν Χριστῷ*. This process is further elaborated upon in Romans 8:11 where the Spirit becomes the activating power to life even as was the case with Christ. It is evident that this gift of life and redemption from death is a powerful incursion of the Divine into the plane of human existence.

The metaphor is pushed to its ultimate expression in Galatians 2:20 where Paul speaks enigmatically of being 'crucified with Christ' and completely transformed so that, "...it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me;..." This is a life lived by faith in the power of God. The same imagery is used in Philippians 3:10-11 wherein the believer becomes like Christ in his death in order to attain the resurrection from the dead. The eschatological motif is explored, explained and amplified in I Corinthians 15 which addresses itself to the final and complete transformation in the eschaton when the process shall have reached its completion.

The initiative for transformation and the power necessary to be transformed comes from God alone. Only God in grace can grant life where there is death. Death metaphorically represents the total absence of life, complete inability to aid in one's own cause; thus grace looms as a true gift which engenders hope within the person. People powered by God can be raised from death to life.

2. Old Nature - New Nature

A parallel image which elaborates upon the death-life theme is

that of having a new nature or being a new creation. Possessing a new nature is both an objective declaration and reality as well as a subjectively appropriated phenomenon. Paul writes, "Though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed each day." (II Cor. 4:16) The processive aspect of the new nature is noted in that this is a daily issue. The transformation process continues despite the external exigencies of existence.

This thought is expanded upon both in Ephesians 4:22-24 and in Colossians 3:9-10. The old nature is associated with the old aeon under the aegis of sin and death. The new nature is that which is fashioned in the image of its Creator and bears the marks of the new aeon.

Thus Paul can write that in Christ, a person becomes a 'new creation' (*καὶ ἡ κτίσις*), the old has passed away, behold the new has come. (II Cor. 5:17) This new creation is an act of God in Christ which obliterates all other distinguishing marks. (Galatians 6:15) The very nature of the new creation compels expulsion of all discriminatory practices characteristic of the old nature.

The imagery again strongly suggests more than just modification or alteration. It is more than growth in the sense of expansion and development of that which is already present as potential. It is a dynamic new creation which carries the seeds of life rather than the spectre of death. There is a real metamorphosis which occurs which issues in qualitative and substantive change. There is a shedding of the old nature and one is clothed with the new nature made possible by the redemptive act and power of God. Metaphorically there is movement from death to life and from the old to the new in the Pauline schema.

3. Darkness ~ Light

The radical newness which comes from being 'in Christ' is lifted up in Pauline writing by another pair of dialectics, namely that of darkness and light. As metaphorical symbols or images the same truth is being expressed utilizing a different expression.

In Romans 13:11ff, Paul enjoins his readers to wake from the sleep of the night for there is the dawning of a new day. In the light of this new day, the works of darkness (τὰ ἔργα τοῦ σκότους) are to be cast off (ἀποθώμεθα) and the armor of light (τα ὅπλα τοῦ φωτός) is to be put on (ἐνδυσώμεθα). The ethical dimension is introduced as evidence of the fact that transformation has indeed occurred. Behavior befitting the believer who is now in the light of the day is called for rather than the former life of darkness with its concomitant activity which Paul delineates in verse thirteen. It behooves the one transformed from darkness into light to responsively live in this new condition granted as a gift of God.

This gift of transformation or light is available in Pauline thought to all. Those who have not embraced the light are those who have committed themselves to "...the god of this world" who keeps them from seeing the 'light of the Gospel.' (II Corinthians 4:4) But to those who are responsive, the idol is destroyed and the true God penetrates the darkness and God's glory becomes manifest in their lives. (II Corinthians 4:6) The authenticity of the light can be judged on the basis of the person's utilization of the gift of light. The purpose in being children of the light is not to reflect oneself,

but to refract the light of God's glory (δόξα) through oneself to the world.

Paul goes so far as to suggest that light and darkness are such polar opposites that there are sociological consequences in terms of marriage. "Do not be mised with unbelievers. For what partnership have righteousness and iniquity? Or what fellowship has light with darkness?" (II Corinthians 5:14)

The light/darkness motif has not only ethical and sociological implications, but eschatological dimensions as well. In I Thessalonians 5:1-11, Paul addresses this community with regard to their eschatological concerns. The assumption is that the believers are already children of the light and of the day so that the projected 'day of the Lord' which was imaged as an apocalyptic event of cataclysmic proportions need not be feared. Those who are children of the light, claimed by God through grace anticipate the parousia not with anxiety, but with anticipation.

The same motif is picked up by the writer of Ephesians 5:6-14. The imagery is that of the stark contrast between what once was, namely existence in darkness and what now is, namely being children of the light. The reality of that designation as 'children of the light' is substantiated in the lives of the believers who do what is good, right, true and pleasing to the Lord and refrain from doing the works associated with darkness. The author elaborates upon the darkness/light motif in suggesting that this is an ongoing battle between diametrically opposed factions and forces. This struggle has not only personal but cosmic dimensions. (Eph. 6:10-17) The

implication is that even though a person might be numbered among those who are 'children of the light,' there is a constant battle in which that person is engaged. The writer uses military imagery to punctuate the reality of that violent struggle. Succinctly stated, transformation in one's life does not mean absence of conflict, temptation and adversity; it requires being adequately equipped with the power of God to contend with the exigencies of life in this world.

The imagery in Colossians 1:12-14 parallels that of Paul in that it is the power of God which is acknowledged as having

...qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. He has delivered us from the dominion of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

The implication in these passages is that the powers of darkness have been overcome, but not obliterated. There is security in knowing the final outcome has been determined, but the struggle is still there so that safety and security are not to be assumed. There is a 'now, but not yet' tension which is evident in this transformation process. The reality that the process has been set in motion is substantiated by a responsive lifestyle which bears witness to the light in manifest ethical behavior in relationship to the world.

4. Bondage - Freedom

The parade of polar opposites in imagery employed by Paul to contrast the transformed from the untransformed life continues with the dialectic of bondage and freedom. The untransformed life is one which is lived in bondage to the law, sin and death. Romans 6:6-7, 15-23 graphically employs this imagery. The untransformed life is

characterized by bondage to sin, but the transformed life has paradoxically been converted into the liberating bondage of slavery to God. The implication is that life has come under the dominion and power of a new master who sets in motion the new dynamics of righteousness, sanctification and eternal life. Paul reiterates this truth in Romans 8:1-2 by stating that the bondage to the law of sin and death has been broken by the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus. This reality sets aside any concern which the believer may have of being condemned for there is no condemnation for those who have been transformed and are in Christ.

Paul avoids an individualistic interpretation of this freeing phenomenon by indicating in Romans 8:21 that the whole cosmos will be set free from *τῆς δουλείας τῆς φθορᾶς* or bondage to decay. Perpetual enslavement in futility yields only putrefication, but there is hope in the 'promissio Dei' for liberation and freedom.

For Paul, 'freedom' from 'slavery' is a theological construct without apparent consonant sociological implications. He intertwines the two considerations in I Corinthians 7:20-24 using the institution of slavery as an example that freedom from bondage does not necessarily mean liberation from physical slavery. The same motif is articulated in the occasional letter to Philemon with regard to Onesimus. Without passing judgment on the sociological and political sensitivities of Paul at this juncture, the concern is that in whatever state one finds oneself physically, there is a state of freedom which transcends the exigencies of space and time.

In defense of his apostleship in I Corinthians 9:1 Paul affirms

the reality of his freedom as a person, but dialectically contends in verse 19 that "For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a slave to all, that I might win the more." This re-echoes the 'bondage to freedom' motif articulated in Romans 6.

In the epistle sometimes termed the Magna Charta of Christian freedom, namely the letter to the Galatians, Paul again picks up the theme of bondage and freedom from a theological perspective. Bondage is equated with life under the law, in the flesh (chapter three) and under the aegis of the old covenant (chapter four). The conclusion of the intricate and complex allegory which Paul utilizes in Galatians 4 is expressed in the last verse of that chapter, "So brethren, we are not children of the slave but of the free woman. For freedom Christ has set us free; stand fast therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery." (Galatians 4:31-5:1) Freedom is the gift of the Gospel which results in responding positively to the Gospel imperative to love.

Freedom from bondage is not to be construed as license (Galatians 5:13) but rather as an opportunity to be of service in love to others. Paradoxically, those who may sense that they are free by the standards of the world may be in bondage to the law, sin and death whereas those who are enslaved by the love of God have been granted freedom to live and to love having been transformed by the power of God.

5. Judgment - Justification

Life lived prior to the transforming power of God is life lived under judgment. Often this condition is expressed with the word *ὀφειλόμενος*

in that it is the wrath of God which is lifted up against all ungodliness and wickedness. (Romans 1:18) As with the issue of bondage, judgment comes about as a result of living life in sin, under the law, or in the flesh; all of which are metaphors for the state of those who have not come under the transforming power of God. (Note Romans 4:15, 5:16)

Life under judgment is life which is lived with an impenitent and recalcitrant disposition towards the mandates of God and the well being of fellow human beings. (Romans 2:1-11) In Pauline theology, human beings are incapable of extricating themselves or vindicating themselves from judgment, it requires an act of God.

The imagery of transformation in conjunction with judgment and condemnation takes on a forensic tone in the language of justification, though the theological and ethical dimensions are also present. Justification or right-wising the human condition is accomplished through the δικαιοσύνη τοῦ θεοῦ. Paul's initial introduction of the term is in Romans 1:17 where righteousness is revealed through faith and for faith. In Romans 3:21-26 Paul graphically portrays the universality of the human condition of sinfulness and the justifying grace of God in Christ which is appropriated in faith. God does the justifying, human beings accept it in faith with the consequence that the relationship between God and human beings has been set right. Faith in the justifying power of God's grace rather than human endeavor becomes the sine qua non of the transformed relationship. (Romans 3:20, 3:28, Galatians 2:15-21, 3:8 and 3:11) That faith is mediated through Christ, "...who was put to

death for our trespasses and raised for our justification." (Romans 4:25)

The results of this declaration of justifying grace through faith is that the person is granted the gift of peace (Romans 5:1), salvation from God's wrath against sin (Romans 5:9) and the knowledge of having been washed and sanctified (I Corinthians 6:11). The Gospel or 'good news' is that this is a 'free gift' (Romans 5:16) and carries with it the forensic declaration of acquittal from wrath and judgment. (Romans 5:18-19)

Paul's concern for guarding the Divine prerogative can be seen in Romans 8:30, 33 and Galatians 3:8 in which he introduces a doctrine of Divine election. Theologically this eliminates any possibility of synergism with regard to the justification process. This is an act conceived and executed in Divine freedom to be accepted by human beings in faith. In summary fashion, E.C. Blackman says concerning the issue of justification.

The forensic metaphor is dropped, and even strict morality transcended, in what the Bible says about God's dealing with sinful man. The comparison of God to a judge carries us part way, but the divine $\pi\tau\gamma$, or righteousness or justification, means much more than punishment of sin. It means that activity wherein God restores the sinner to goodness. This is the deepest insight of the OT and the real truth underlying the logic of the Letter to the Romans. God puts in the way of righteousness men who can claim no actual righteousness but who offer a simple coin stamped on one side penitence and on the other faith. Man's ultimate perfection is the gift of God.¹³

Blackman and others thus see justification as one of the major hermeneutical keys to the understanding and formulation of Pauline

¹³E.C. Blackman, "Justification, Justify," in Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible, II, 1029-1030.

theology.

E. SUMMARY

One can extrapolate from Paul's writing a number of theological tenets which are helpful in understanding his concept of transformation. These may be noted as follows:

- 1) The initiative for setting the process in motion always resides with God and not with human beings.
- 2) The incapability and impotency of human endeavor to rectify the relational problems between God and human beings is affirmed.
- 3) The primacy of faith as a response to grace which has been freely given is a central concept in Paul's thought.
- 4) The reality of continuing struggle is affirmed. Even though the person has been declared as justified and right with God and the dynamic of transformation has been set in motion, the believer still exists in tension. The centrality of the Christ event has ushered in the new age in which transformation can occur. The victory is assured, but the battle is not yet complete and therefore the struggle continues. (Romans 7:15-25) The new relationship can be described as having been established, but it has not yet been brought to completion or fruition.
- 5) Despite this 'tension,' the possibility of peace, love and hope are realities in spite of the prevailing circumstances and situation. There is the possibility of living 'as though' the activity of God was complete, but not 'as if' it were already accomplished.
- 6) The reality and efficacy of the process is not contingent

upon subjective appropriation of it for validation. It is noted that,

The biblical emphasis is thus not upon a subjective psychological experience, but upon an objective change in man. But the change is not simply to be achieved by outward deed, for it was this conception which Jesus repudiated in Pharisaic teaching (Mark 7:6-23). True turning to God follows upon repentance and belief, and it leads not only to an observable new way of life, but to a spiritual transformation as well: 'And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being changed into his likeness from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.'¹⁴

That objective declaration and resultant change of mind and direction in human beings is also the way to psychic tranquility and peace. As the message is appropriated and its implications implemented, the total person as mind, body and spirit will wholistically experience the benefits of the transformation process.

The transformation process thus affects both the outward nature as well as the inward nature. The outer nature is often compliant or conforming to a given pattern, but when the power of God touches the inward being and there is surrender to the power which can effect change; then there is not only peace without, but peace within, irrespective of the prevailing circumstances and situation confronting that individual.

The life and writings of Paul are a bold historical witness to the transforming power of God's grace operative in life. As Paul theologized about the transformation process, there are striking similarities and parallels to the experience of those in the recovery process from alcoholism. Alcoholics come to realize that it is God who has been gracious in setting the transformation process in motion and

¹⁴J. Marsh, "Conversion," in Interpreter's Bible Dictionary, I, 678.

that they were incapable of doing that for themselves. Their new found faith in a Higher Power liberates them from bondage to addiction and sets them on a new path of freedom. Like Paul, they realize that the 'conversion' experience is the 'turning point' only and that the struggle for sobriety and serenity continues, but there is a new perspective on life which enables them to live in peace.

The same theological and psychological dynamics are at work in the transformation process irrespective of the time, place or situation. The commonality is the reality that this is the power of God at work in the human arena to effect transformation. The biblical paradigm of the Apostle Paul is evidence of the truth that God is operative in the historical process and the lives of individuals and families effecting health and salvation.

CHAPTER X

THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION ON TRANSFORMATION - A LUTHERAN PERSPECTIVE

A. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to explicate the Lutheran understanding of transformation as exemplified in its confessional theology and as elucidated by the foremost Lutheran theologian of this century, Paul Tillich. It seems logical to move from the Pauline paradigm of transformation as considered in the last chapter as a biblical base to the theological formulation of transformation as articulated by the Lutheran Church. It is readily recognized that the basis of Lutheran theology is primarily Pauline, as interpreted by Augustine and reinterpreted by Martin Luther. Methodologically this chapter will begin with theology and move towards understanding its contribution and parallel process with psychology in understanding transformation as it has specifically focused in on the alcoholic and his/her family system.

The investigation begins with a consideration of the relationship between Pauline theology and Lutheran theology. The move from the emphasis upon the objective declaration and activity of God in the transformation process as seen in Pauline theology to the more introspective dimension began according to Krister Stendahl with Augustine who was the direct link between Paul and Martin Luther. He states,

It was he (Augustine) who applied Paul's doctrine of justification to the problem of the introspective conscience, to the question: 'On what basis does a person find salvation?' And with Augustine,

Western Christianity with its stress on introspective achievements started.¹

It continued to develop through the Middle Ages and according to Stendahl received more attention and concern than it should merit. He goes on to say that, "It reached its theological climax and explosion in the Reformation, and its secular climax and explosion in Sigmund Freud, but Paul was never involved in this pursuit."² While Stendahl's position is accurate, nonetheless it was out of the subjective turmoil of an Augustinian monk, Martin Luther, that the Pauline thrust was rediscovered and reappropriated. Its objective character was reaffirmed because of the subjective need on the part of Luther to experience a right relationship with God. Luther's principle question was, 'wie kriegt man einen gnaedigen Gott?' His life is a living witness of one who sought to secure an answer to that question. It was a long and arduous faith journey beset by many complications and Anfechtungen as Luther termed his spiritual temptations before he discovered that transformation does not come about by human effort, but by the grace of God alone. Luther came to realize that God had done for him what he could not do for himself. This language is reminiscent of and identical to those who have experienced transformation and subsequent recovery from the disease of alcoholism.

The doctrinal tenets of Lutheranism germane to the discussion will be considered along with their applicability and/or parallelism with the recovery process from alcoholism. This section moves from

¹Krister Stendahl, Paul Among the Jews and Gentiles (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976) 16.

²Stendahl, 17.

theology to life whereas previous chapters methodologically began with the human situation and then moved to reflect upon it theologically. By exercising these twin methodological approaches, it is hoped that a synthesis can be effected which will be useful for the pastoral counselor as s/he utilizes the resources of theology and the social sciences in carrying out an effective ministry with the chemically dependent and their families.

B. THE NATURE AND REALITY OF THE HUMAN CONDITION

Theologically the nature of the human condition in the Lutheran tradition has been defined by the word 'sin'. Human beings have been created in the image of God for the sake of relationship, but this harmonious relationship has been interrupted by sin which is described in the mythical image of the fall. (Genesis 3) Human beings still bear the image of God, but the relationship has been forfeited because of sin. The emphasis in the confessional writings is on the universality of sin as indigneous to the human condition.³

Sin is defined as a state of being as opposed to an atomistic definition which delineates specific thoughts, word or deeds as sinful. Rather, the thoughts, words and deeds of human beings reflect the reality of the sinful condition both individually and corporately.

³The major confessional statements of Lutheranism are contained in the Book of Concord. Rather than quoting these statements in their entirety, reference to specific doctrines will be indicated by the appropriate page numbers without specific indication of the confessional writing itself. For the reference to sin see: Theodore Tapper (ed.) The Book of Concord (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1959) 29, 40-41, 100-107, 226, 302-303, 466-469, 508-519.

The situation of humankind being in sin is expressed in a multiplicity of ways. When taken together they form a composite, though not complete picture of the human condition.

1. Sin as Basic Anxiety and Estrangement

Paul Tillich writes,

The state of existence is the state of estrangement. Man is estranged from the ground of his being, from other beings, and from himself. The transition from essence to existence results in personal guilt and universal tragedy.⁴

Tillich's definition gives existential expression to the meaning of the mythical story of the human fall from grace and harmony into sin. The ensuing result of separation, isolation and estrangement form the fertile ground from which the seeds of anxiety sprout and develop. Conscious cognizance of the condition is not always conceded thus giving rise to an often unidentified free-floating anxiety as the reality of estrangement comes to expression in human existence. Keller states,

The anxiety of estrangement in this ultimate relationship in life may not be man's most conscious anxiety, but theologically it is man's most basic anxiety.⁵

Theologically, estrangement from God is the root cause of the human dilemma. This often intuitive awareness of estrangement and the concomitant anxiety which it produces causes dis-ease within the person which seeks resolution. One way of attempting to cope with this given

⁴Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957) II, 60.

⁵John Keller, Ministering to the Alcoholic (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1966) 5.

of the human condition is to anesthetize oneself to the feelings of isolation which accompany the reality of estrangement. Individuals find temporary relief from the pain of estrangement in the consumption of beverage alcohol which becomes the antidote for anxiety. It is, however, only a temporary solution and when the anesthetizing effect is gone, the sense of estrangement as isolation is exacerbated prompting the person to imbibe again to achieve the same desired effect. The vicious cycle is set in motion and in time the addictive cycle has command of the individual. Sin defined as basic anxiety and estrangement can be directly related to the situation of the alcoholic and his/her family.

2. Sin as Denial of Finitude

The human condition is likewise marked by its inability to accept the reality of finitude. The fantasies of humanity are infinite, but the capability for fulfilling those fantasies are limited. The truth of the biblical myth in Genesis 3 is universal as human beings succumb to the temptation to 'be like God' (Genesis 3:5). The self seeking divine status to escape the bonds of finitude leads ultimately to self deification. As a result faith in God as infinite Power is abnegated and elevation of the self to alleged divinity is embraced.

This confusion of the creature with the Creator is biblically designated as hubris, commonly translated as 'pride' or 'egocentricity.' However, it moves beyond these definitions to a position of self deification and ascribing in Tillich's terminology,

ultimate meaning to pen-ultimate concerns. Tillich writes with regard to this dimension of sin,

Its main symptom is that man does not acknowledge his finitude. He identifies partial truth with ultimate truth...people have identified their limited goodness with absolute goodness,...man identifies his cultural creativity with divine creativity. He attributes infinite significance to his finite cultural creations...

These examples are taken from forms of hubris which have historical significance and transcend individual destiny. They show irrefutably the universally human character of self-elevation.⁶

Because of this reality in relationship to the human situation Tillich writes further,

All men have the hidden desire to be like God, and they act accordingly in their self-evaluation and self-affirmation. No one is willing to acknowledge, in concrete terms, his finitude, his weakness and his errors, his ignorance and his insecurity, his loneliness and his anxiety.⁷

The failure to achieve divinity does not seem to diminish the desire to become divine; on the contrary, it seems to fan the flames so that the effort is increased.

The consumption of alcohol is a chemical attempt to deny one's finitude and euphorically rise above the existential reality of limitation. The effect of alcohol appears to make divinity attainable. When drinking the person may posit the ability to accomplish feats which are superhuman in nature, there is created a pseudo-transcendent sensation of having risen above the exigencies of life and being omnipotent in one's actions and omniscient in one's knowledge. A false sense of security is engendered which defies finite limitations. It is a feeling and awareness which is consistently

⁶Tillich, II, 51.

⁷Tillich, II, 51.

sought after because it provides a solution to the entrapment of finitude. Howard Clinebell elaborates on this phenomenon in this manner,

He handles his existential anxiety by either religious or pseudo-religious means. His religious needs include a need for experiences of the transcendent, for a sense of meaning and value in one's existence, and for a feeling of deep trust and relatedness to life. As the alcoholic's illness progresses, he tends increasingly to handle all three aspects of his religious need by means of alcohol. It provides a kind of mystical life, a summum bonum to fill his value-vacuum (Frankl), and temporary feelings of trust and closeness to people. Alcohol is, for him, a Janus-faced God; it's hidden face is that of a demon.⁸

Thus one can see a very profound theological issue and concern related to the conceptualization of sin as denial of finitude in the alcoholic. The vicious circle of addiction sets in as the substance is consistently used often with increasing dosages to attain the desired effect of denying one's finitude and asserting one's sense of divinity.

3. Sin as Concupiscence

Classical theology often utilized the word 'concupiscentia' as a designation for sin or a manifestation of a sinful nature. This terminology represents the self-centeredness of human beings and the insatiable thirst to be in a position of having unlimited access and usage of the world. Tillich says,

...it places him in the position of drawing the whole of his world into himself. It elevates him beyond his particularity and makes him universal on the basis of his particularity.⁹

⁸Howard J. Clinebell, Jr., "Alcoholism and Ethical Issues," in The Pastoral Care Function of the Congregation To the Alcoholic and His Family (New York: National Council of Churches, 1962) 44.

⁹Tillich, II, 52.

It is another manifestation of self-deification which attempts to put the world at his/her control and disposal.

The possibility of reaching unlimited abundance is the temptation of man who is a self and has a world. The classical name for this desire is concupiscentia 'concupiscence - the unlimited desire to draw the whole of reality into one's self.'¹⁰

This describes in accurate fashion the nature of addiction. It becomes a thirst which cannot be assuaged. The alcoholic may imbibe phenomenal quantities of alcohol in a relentless effort to fill himself/herself, but it is a thirst which cannot be satisfied, yet mercilessly drives the individual on to seek satisfaction in satiation.

This dimension of sin is expressed in other patterns of behavior as well. The fantasies of grandiosity in making irrational claims and figuratively consuming everyone and everything in his/her path as though the world owed him/her that right are evident. The void or vacuum which is often euphemistically referred to by alcoholics as the 'hole in the gut' seeks to be filled, but there is not sufficient material to satisfy the insatiable thirst for fulfillment. What little satisfaction which may be garnered serves only to exacerbate the thirst. It is no more satisfying than a single drop of water for one dying of thirst in the desert.

4. Sin as Defiance and Rebellion

Another perspective and dimension of sin as it relates to the nature and reality of the human condition is proud defiance and rebellion against God and other human beings. The inability and

¹⁰Tillich, II, 52.

failure at achieving divine status often results in defiant rebellion, a self-imposed separation which mocks authority and power.

The proud defiant stance not only mires the person deeper in his/her own dis-ease with life and the world, but precludes any real possibility for a truly enriched life.

...in this defiant pose he deceives no one more than himself, who is too stubborn to acknowledge the infinite possibilities that might enlarge and enhance life. There is no crisis more serious than the pride that refuses to face the crisis.¹¹

Emil Brunner characterizes this proud defiance as a major characteristic of the sinful condition in his work, Man in Revolt.¹²

There is resistance to dealing with proud defiance which takes the shape of an offense to the person. Paterson indicates that the offense was Christianity's claim that a person must undergo a radical change because of his/her unacceptableness. The result of this radical change is a complete reorientation in his/her value structure.¹³ This is an affront to one's pride and defiance and rebellion is the result as the person entrenches himself/herself more deeply in his/her position.

Living with this need to be on top and shoring up one's pride and image in the face of what is happening creates a vicious circle. Woodruff states this most accurately and succinctly.

Alcoholics cannot live with their pride and self-glorification, but they feel that they would be reduced to nothing without it. It is

¹¹Paul Johnson, The Psychology of Religion (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1959) 123.

¹²Emil Brunner, Man in Revolt (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1947)

¹³W.P. Paterson, Conversion (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1940) xii.

very easy for 'alcoholic pride' to be converted into 'spiritual pride' in the process of Christian conversion. This is perhaps the converted alcoholic's greatest temptation.¹⁴

Following the lead of Reinhold Niebuhr and Emil Brunner theologically, pride, defiance and rebellion become marks which substantiate the reality of the human condition of sinfulness. These are not traits or manifestations of sin which are indigenous to the disease of alcoholism, but they find their expression in pronounced ways among those who are alcoholic.

Dealing with the multiple facets of estrangement in Tillich's sense which comprises the essence of sin enables one to ascribe theological categories to human conditions. Sin can be seen as the human quest to find meaning, wholeness and peace with God. Stewart describes it as a 'basic thirst' which is indigenous to the human situation.¹⁵ At this point human beings become their own worst enemy by actively seeking to overcome estrangement and to establish new meaning through their own efforts. Theologically resolution does not come about by human effort, but by divine initiative.

The disease of alcoholism in relationship to sin is viewed by many from a variety of perspectives. Howard Clinebell has carefully delineated these in seven categories.¹⁶ All psychological, sociological and cultural factors notwithstanding, Clinebell states,

¹⁴Roy C. Woodruff, Alcoholism and Christian Experience (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1968) 32.

¹⁵David A. Stewart, Thirst for Freedom (Toronto: Musson, 1960) 186.

¹⁶Howard J. Clinebell, Jr., Understanding and Counseling the Alcoholic (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1968) 168-171.

There seems to be a certain recalcitrance at the very center of man's nature which inhibits him in doing that which he knows to be good. This has been referred to in traditional language, as the 'bondage of the will.' Even in his best acts, man seems to have an inescapable self-centeredness - a condition which causes him to deify his institutions, the things he has made, and even himself.

The alienation from God which results from this idolatry is at the very root of man's aloneness and anxiety. By making himself the center of the universe, man cuts himself off from his own fulfillment which can take place only as he establishes a genuine relatedness to the rest of creation and to the Creator.¹⁷

Verdery in his analysis of the nature of sin in relationship to alcoholism says that the sin versus disease designation is not a helpful dichotomy. "Alcoholism is more than sin, more than a disease: it is an emotional and spiritual disorder."¹⁸ As a result there is a profound sense of sin as separation. Verdery states,

..one may well say that the alcoholic is living in sin if one understands sin as a state of separation from God and man. Such a person does not need to die to go to Hell. He is living in Hell because he is alienated from God and his fellow man.¹⁹

These designations and definitions of sin avoid the moralistic, atomistic, legalistic and casuistic understanding of the word in relationship to the phenomenon of alcoholism. Alcoholism is one more manifestation of the reality of sin as separation from God and from divine intentions for human beings. Theologically the alcoholic should be viewed as one who is in need of help from God and fellow human beings. Labeling the alcoholic with derogatory terminology is only hurtful and never helpful. It is a way of defining sin as abrogation

¹⁷Clinebell, Understand, 171.

¹⁸E.A. Verdery, "The Clergy and Alcoholism," in Ruth Fox (ed.) Alcoholism (New York: Springer, 1967) 273.

¹⁹Verdery, 274.

of the law rather than state of separation from God and others.²⁰

From the confessional posture of Lutheran theology this fits well into the understanding of sin and its manifestations in the lives of human beings. It issues in a sense of powerlessness, impotence and unmanageability as noted in the first step of A.A. Human beings are not left in their sin nor in their futile struggle to remove themselves out of their estranged and alienated state, this is accomplished for them by the power and grace of God.

C. DIVINE INTENTION, INITIATIVE AND INTERVENTION

The task of theology is to articulate what the community believes about the God whom they worship. The confessional writings are replete with references to the doctrine of God.²¹ Principle theological tenets are that God is Trinitarian, that God has been most dramatically revealed in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. The incarnation represents the kenosis of God and through it the nature of God and God's disposition towards humankind has been most decisively revealed. Jesus as the Christ becomes the most pivotal figure in history incorporating within Himself both true God and true humanity. The incarnation is an act of supreme love for the transcendent God becomes immanent on the plane of history (Galatians 4:4), enters into the human condition, identifies with human needs and suffering and ultimately gives His own life for the sake of human redemption.

²⁰Verdery, 273.

²¹Tappert, 27-30, 100, 107, 291-292, 344-345, 411-420, 486-492 and 591-610.

Lutheran theology invests heavily in Christology as the primary focus of God's revelation.

The incarnational God becomes the exalted Christ, but does not leave the community without witness and power. God continues to be active in both corporate and personal history through the mediation of the Holy Spirit. It is the work of the Spirit which calls people into the fellowship of the believers, grants to believers the gift of faith and provides for the believing community the sustaining presence of the eternal.²² The principle way in which the Spirit operates is through the Word. In the reading and proclamation of the Word, the person comes under the influence of both Law and Gospel.²³ This dialectic both convicts of sin by clearly lifting up the reality of the human condition and also provides the divine resolution to the human dilemma in the free gift of grace as found in the Gospel. Thus God in the Spirit continues to be dynamically operative in the individual and corporate lives of people.

The reality of the human condition and the need for the power of God may not be acknowledged or accepted by human beings. The awareness of that truth is often brought about by crisis. Crises may serve to drive one to the Ultimate who alone has power to intervene.

Where there is little awareness of need, there is little concern for anything. But where the need is great, human concern rises with the sense of urgency to ultimate pitch. Religion as ultimate concern is a quest for the greatest value and destiny of life. When local values are lost and the familiar props of complacency fall, then our little securities are broken and we know they are helpless to save

²²Tappert, 345, 415-420.

²³Tappert, 303, 310, 477-481 and 558-568.

us. Desperate need calls for greater resources than our customary defenses and feeble futilities. When the half-gods go, we turn to the ultimate Thou, realizing as never before that no other will be relevant to our ultimate concern.²⁴

Denial results in a temporary solution for the person, but it is obvious that it is not a permanent solution. Inevitably defeat comes which requires more than the person is able to provide. This may force one to look at ultimate concerns.²⁵

The need to be lifted out of the isolation and fragmentation and relate to oneself, others and God is at stake. Under the general dis-ease with life, there is the need for an answer which lies outside of oneself. The human predicament is in need of resolution.

Kierkegaard, who took an equally serious view of man's predicament (like Freud) believed there was a way of salvation open to man by renunciation and singleness of devotion to God in faith that only God can give. James and Boisen agree that the crisis of conflict and despair is of fatal proportions and that there will be no easy way out. The solution is to be found in religious conversion, which is a revolution decisive enough to transform the whole personality.²⁶

The defenses finally break down and in so doing the person becomes open to a new understanding of himself/herself and God. The possibility of conversion becomes a viable probability.²⁷

Theologically speaking, it is not the crisis which occasions the transformation. The crisis is the human condition and situation which prompts the individual to be open to the activity of God.

²⁴Johnson, 108.

²⁵Johnson, 124.

²⁶Johnson, 107-108.

²⁷Johnson, 108.

Transformation is a gift of grace which is operative in the individual once the resistive barriers have been broken down by the crisis. Those who have experienced the divine initiative and intervention and have had the transformation process set in motion attribute it to, "...a strong and ineradicable conviction that they had been apprehended by God," and "...it seemed clear that they had not in themselves the inclination or the power to bring it about, and that it could only have been wrought by Him with whom all things are possible."²⁸

The theological construct which guards the sovereignty of God's grace and action is that of election. Those who have undergone conversion as Paterson notes, "...have good reason to think that all of it was God's doing, including the will to believe and obey,..."²⁹ This is not to suggest theologically that God chooses a select few to whom the gift of transformation is given, for God desires that all should turn and come to the knowledge of the truth. Human beings have been granted the capability of being resistive even to the entree of God. The initiative and offer of grace rests with God, acceptance is made possible by the Spirit of God and rejection of this gracious gift is within the province of human freedom.

In the recovery process from alcoholism, it is most often the crisis which ultimately enables the person who is drinking or significant other person to come to the realization and belief that there is a Power which can restore the person and family system to sanity. The gracious offer of transformation is continually available,

²⁸Paterson, 178.

²⁹Paterson, 204.

but often is not appropriated until such time that all human resources have been exhausted. It is at that point of complete exhaustion and defeat that the divine initiative is accepted and divine intervention is both allowed and appreciated.

D. THE RESPONSE OF FAITH

The response to the divine initiative and intervention is faith. Faith is understood not as intellectual assent to a given set of dogmatic propositions, but rather as implicit trust in the grace and goodness of God. This understanding is central in the Lutheran confessions.³⁰

Faith is often spoken of as a 'leap' (Kierkegaard) into the arms of the eternal, a commitment of certitude and trust in the ultimate goodness of God. The author of Hebrews defines faith as the "...assurance of things hoped for and the conviction of things not seen." (Hebrews 11:1)

Faith is defined by Tillich as, "...the state of being grasped by an ultimate concern."³¹ Stated in another way Tillich writes,

Faith, as the Spiritual Presence's invasion of the conflicts and ambiguities of man's life under the dimension of the spirit, is not an act of cognitive affirmation within the subject-object structure of reality. Therefore it is not subject to verification by experiment or trained experience.³²

Faith does not come about by the creation of the intellect, the

³⁰Tappert, 41-46, 226-229, 472-475 and 539-551.

³¹Tillich, III, 130.

³²Tillich, III, 131.

endeavor of the will or the needs of human emotions. The finite cannot elevate itself to become infinite, but rather it is the infinite which grasps that which is finite.³³ Tillich goes on to identify three specific elements of faith.

The first element in faith is its receptive character, its mere passivity in relation to the divine Spirit. The second element is faith in its paradoxical character, its courageous standing in the Spiritual Presence. The third element characterizes faith as anticipatory, its quality as hope for the fulfilling creativity of the divine Spirit.³⁴

Tillich's definition of faith is helpful in that it affirms the dynamic character of faith as well as the affirmation that the genesis of faith is in God. There is a receptive character and passivity in relation to the divine initiative. Since human beings cannot reach the ultimate, but only be grasped by it according to Tillich; it is crucial that all such futile efforts be forfeited and that human beings surrender to the Divine. In this disposition of open receptivity to the Divine, all fantasies of omnipotence are given up, all egocentricity and self-centeredness discarded in order that the true center of all existence might be given access and its creative powers take root in human life.

Faith is being open to God's future and that openness comes about through surrender of self sovereignty to yield to the grace of God's sovereignty.

This definition of faith as proffered by Tillich has meaning and importance in understanding the dynamic of transformation. For the

³³Tillich, III. 133.

³⁴Tillich, III, 133.

person addicted to alcohol, all human efforts proved futile. The alcoholic attempts to find meaning in life, but meaning and purpose remain elusive. Ultimately s/he finds meaning only in surrender to God who can fill the 'existential vacuum'³⁵ with purpose and possibilities. When sensing that s/he is grasped by the Eternal, a sense of trust which has been absent is born. When the alcoholic surrenders the myth of self as a source of safety and dares to trust others, "...then a redemptive transformation occurs."³⁶

The transformation experience touches the very fabric of the person's being. Roy Woodruff in his work utilizes the word 'conversion' and speaks of the phenomenon as a 'comprehensive' as opposed to a 'restrictive' conversion. The word 'comprehensive' is a graphic way of expressing the totality of transformation stemming from a transcendent source. It is a holistic response of faith to God's grace which is capable of breaking the addictive pattern.³⁷ This total or comprehensive experience has wide range effects according to Woodruff.

The individual with a comprehensive Christian conversion maintains harmony within himself through honesty and a sense of worth. He maintains harmony with his environment through sharing himself, with his own identity, in an open relationship with others. His self-consistency is maintained through his personal faith in God and his fellowship with those who share his faith.³⁸

³⁵Woodruff, 74.

³⁶Clinebell, "Alcoholism and Ethical," 43.

³⁷Woodruff, 41-42.

³⁸Woodruff, 43.

Woodruff's emphasis is most important for it stresses the totality of the experience. Rather than using adjectival qualifiers in relationship to the phenomenon of conversion, it seems judicious to use the word conversion to refer to the punctiliar event or events which precipitate the process and use the term as suggested in this dissertation of transformation to describe the total ongoing process.

Thus having realized the necessity of a power greater than self to cope with the addictive cycle, the alcoholic and family in faith turn their wills and their lives over to the care of God. With that surrender comes release and relief.

E. JUSTIFICATION BY GRACE

The cardinal doctrine in Lutheran theology is that human beings are justified by grace through faith. Grace is the divine gift, faith the human response and the final declaration is that human beings are justified or set right in their relationship with God. Confessional evidence with regard to the centrality of this theological theme is replete.³⁹ Tillich conceptualizes this process by stating that before justification, regeneration occurs. This means that the person is apprehended by the Spiritual Presence in a monergism of grace wherein s/he becomes aware of that presence. Tillich writes,

...Regeneration precedes Justification; for Justification presupposes faith, the state of being grasped by the divine presence. Faith, justifying faith, is not a human act, although it happens in man; faith is the work of the divine Spirit, the power which creates the New Being, in the Christ, in individuals, in the

³⁹Tappert, 30, 107-168, 315, 345, 413-415 and 539-551.

church...Like Regeneration, Justification is first an objective event and then a subjective reception.⁴⁰

Grace is preeminent in this process by awakening the person to the Presence of God, awarding the gift of faith which enables him/her to accept that gift and appropriate it in his/her life.

Justification in its objective form is an action of God, "...by which he accepts as not estranged those who are indeed estranged from him by guilt and the act by which he takes them into the unity with him which is manifest in the New Being in Christ."⁴¹ For Tillich there is also a subjective dimension which the forensic approach to understanding justification does not take cognizance of in its formulation. Tillich addresses the nature of the subjective side of this process by saying,

Indeed, there is nothing in man which enables God to accept him. But man must accept just this. He must accept that he is accepted; he must accept acceptance. And the question is how this is possible in spite of the guilt which makes him hostile to God. The traditional answer is 'Because of Christ!'.It means that one is drawn into the power of the New Being in Christ, which makes faith possible; that it is the state of unity between God and man, no matter how fragmentarily realized. Accepting that one is accepted is the paradox of salvation without which there would be no salvation but only despair.⁴²

It is important to note Tillich's concern that initially this may be only fragmentarily realized in the person. The objective declaration is clear, concise and unambiguous; the subjective appropriation of this fact in faith is processive and extends over a longer or shorter period of time dependent upon the individual.

⁴⁰Tillich, II, 178.

⁴¹Tillich, II, 178.

⁴²Tillich, II, 179.

Theologically the truth and reality of the process is the divine answer in extricating the human being from an impossible situation.

The application of this theological tenet in the recovery and transformation process is most evident. The alcoholic is making an attempt to justify himself/herself on two different levels. The first is an attempt to justify himself/herself in his/her own eyes and that of those who are close. Intuitively sensing his/her own worthlessness, every attempt is made to convince others and himself/herself to the contrary. Grandiosity may be the most blatant evidence of this attempt. On another level, there is also an attempt to justify oneself before God and defiantly challenge God by self-deification. The sense of failure on both scores prompts more drinking, rationalizing and alibing. There is no surrender to the gift of grace being offered, yet this is precisely what the person needs. Keller states,

In this light, we see the alcoholic seeking life in the sense that he is seeking to escape the anxiety of his estrangement. From the bottle he is attempting to resolve that which can ultimately be resolved only in Agape and human responsibility. Alcohol backfires on him. It becomes his master. As he seeks to save his own life he loses it. If the alcoholism goes unchecked, he will eventually end up living to drink and drinking to live, and that is death.⁴³

Justification or right-wising is the divine solution to the human predicament conceived and initiated by God, appropriated and accepted by faith. Its unconditional character is "good news" for the alcoholic and family as the declaration is made in the freedom of God's love. Its appropriation is made possible through the gift of faith which accepts the new status of one's being forgiven.

⁴³Keller, 12.

F. THE DYNAMIC OF FORGIVENESS

Forgiveness is the divine posture in relationship to the human condition. It is more than a superficial glossing over of human infirmity, rather it is the divine decree that a new dynamic is operative in the relationship between God and human beings. Warren Quanbeck speaks of three varying theologies involving the concept of forgiveness. In the first sense it carries with it the sense of wholeness and becoming fully human once again. This is in relationship to those who are ill, diseased or suffering from the debilitating influence of demonic powers in biblical imagery. Forgiveness also takes the form of atonement or expiation when used in conjunction with sin as guilt. If sin is conceptualized as rebellion and defiance, forgiveness takes on the character of reconciliation and removal of the barriers between God and human beings as well as between human beings themselves.⁴⁴

In Luther's personal life, in his theological formulations and in the confessional heritage of the Lutheran Church; forgiveness has stood at the center of the message of grace and justification. Its three dimensional character as wholeness, expiation and reconciliation speaks dramatically to the human situation. Tillich distinguishes between divine and human forgiveness by stating that "...divine forgiveness does not, as does every human forgiveness, require that he who forgives shall himself be forgiven."⁴⁵ Divine forgiveness is

⁴⁴Warren Quanbeck, "Forgiveness," in The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible (Nashville: Abingdon, Press, 1962) II, 319.

⁴⁵Tillich, III, 225.

unconditional, eradicating the barriers between God and human beings. It is Divine forgiveness which brings about a transformation in human beings which enables them to also forgive one another in love.

In relationship to the alcoholic and family, all three dimensions of forgiveness are equally applicable. The sense of fragmentation and lack of wholeness with the dis-ease is a primary component of the phenomenon of alcoholism. Forgiveness in the sense of restoration to health and sanity is an integral part of recovery for the whole family system. Forgiveness carries heavy freight in the reduction of guilt for the alcoholic and the family. Johnson notes this in relationship to this process, "The price of forgiving comes high, because it forces the forgiver, also, to accept his own or her own failings and destructive attitudes as needing similar forgiveness."⁴⁶

Dealing with the guilt is a reality to be accepted in order that a new kind of freedom can prevail. It eliminates the drive for perfectionism which theologically is an attempt to be saved by the works of the law and opens the person up to accept his/her humanity. Luther saw that guilt drove a person in curvatus se, that is, back into himself/herself. It prompted people to dwell on their shortcomings and the consequent wrath of God. Martin states in this connection,

I assume that we all are created in the image of God and that we are meant to live up to that potential. We are meant to live in such a way that we 'use ourselves up.' That we never do completely live up to our potential, that we never get 'used up,' is only a sign of our fallen condition. We are sinners. But feeling guilty about this and fearing the wrath of God because of it is both silly and a waste

⁴⁶Vernon Johnson, I'll Quit Tomorrow (New York: Harper & Row, 1973) 107.

of time. The whole point of the gospel is the good news that our guilt has been dealt with on the cross. We don't have to fear the wrath of God any longer.⁴⁷

Forgiving one another also spares the family system from incurring the wrath of each other which may be more real than the wrath of God. It frees each person from guilt as well as the sense of defiance and rebellion. Reconciliation becomes both possible and probable as the message of forgiveness is appropriated, accepted and applied.

Verdery notes in relationship to the alcoholic that the community of faith can be an important component in mediating the experience of forgiveness for the alcoholic.

As a community of people are forgiven and forgiving so they may help the alcoholic deal with his guilt. It must be accepted as it is, it is neither minimized nor magnified. The guilt having been accepted realistically, with a sense of need for mercy and for understanding, it is possible for grace and freedom to become the dominant emotions rather than guilt and anxiety.⁴⁸

The theological formulation of forgiveness is a powerful dynamic in the amelioration of guilt and the alleviation of anxiety as experienced by the alcoholic and his/her family. The crucial issue is translating the theological truth into the practical reality of effectively executing this in behalf of the alcoholic and his/her family.

G. REPENTANCE AND RESTORATION

The human response to the activity of God in granting justification, faith and forgiveness is to repent through confession

⁴⁷Greg Martin, Spiritus Contra Spiritum (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1977) 169.

⁴⁸Verdery, 277.

and make provision for amendment of life. Amendment of life encompasses restoration within the community and restitution to those who have been done injustice because of sin. Lutheran theology emphatically states that one cannot rectify the relationship between God and human beings, but that human beings are responsible and accountable for amendment of life. The confessions are again replete with references with regard to this process.⁴⁹ Tillich links up linguistically conversion with the concept of repentance and says that,

The true nature of conversion is well expressed in the words denoting it in different languages. The word shubh in Hebrew points to a turning around on one's way, especially in the social and political spheres. It points to a turning away from injustice toward justice, from inhumanity to humanity, from idols to God. The Greek word metanoia implies the same idea but in relation to the mind, which changes from one direction to another, from the temporal to the eternal, from oneself to God. The Latin word conversio (in German *Be-kehrung*) unites the spatial image with the intellectual content. These words and the images they provoke suggest two elements: the negation of a preceding direction of thought and action and the affirmation of the opposite direction.⁵⁰

Theologically one is first apprehended by the Spiritual Presence in a monergism of grace. Having been awakened by the Spirit to the reality of grace and forgiveness leads to confession and repentance. Lutheran theology affirms that those who have first been prompted by the Spirit and enabled to receive the Gospel message make confession of their sin, repent of it and receive absolution. Thus repentance and confession are not seen as pre-requisites for grace, an activity whereby grace is earned or merited, but as appropriate responses to grace. The parable of the Waiting Father provides a biblical paradigm to illustrate the

⁴⁹Tappert, 34, 180-211, 303-310, 349-351 and 457-461.

⁵⁰Tillich, III, 219.

point. Before the Father knew the attitude and disposition of the returning prodigal, He had already in joy accepted and forgiven him. The responsibility of the son was then to respond to that grace and amend his lifestyle, not to secure or retain the Father's favor, but to appropriately respond to it.

When the justifying and forgiving grace of God becomes a reality then there is a true 'turning around' or repentance which issues from this situation which is characteristically initiated by confession. Lutheran theology is concerned that confession not be seen as a way to earn God's favor nor as an act which serves to terrify one's conscience, but as a way of unburdening one's sense of sin and guilt and thus enjoy more completely the freedom afforded by this action. Paterson notes that the essence of conversion is change of heart and lifestyle. It must begin with a breach from the old life before new life can begin.⁵¹

The theological dialectic again becomes clear. The monergism of God's grace is to guard against synergism, but grace without the appropriate response of repentance is as Bonhoeffer terms it, 'cheap grace.' The two are to be held in dialectical tension without theological concession. The imperative of the Gospel follows in that such a process requires change. Paterson writes, "While it is made clear that a man is not justified because of any merit he has acquired, it was equally insisted that he is not justified without being radically changed."⁵²

⁵¹Paterson, 48.

⁵²Paterson, 105.

This 'turning point' or repentance is then followed by restoration to one's full inheritance as a child of God and evokes a response of restitution. Once again, restitution is made because it is fitting and proper. It is not so much payment so as to make up for past faults as it is a positive move towards reconciliation with one's fellow human beings. The biblical paradigm to illustrate this truth is the figure of Zacchaeus in Luke 19:1-10. His response to the grace afforded him in the Spiritual Presence of Christ was restitution. (verse eight) His full restoration to humanity came about through restitution which was not coerced, but rather a free and spontaneous response to grace.

Repentance, confession, restoration and restitution are theological categories which are most appropriate in working with the alcoholic. The fourth and fifth steps allow for the expression of confession which signals true repentance. Having turned one's life over to the care of God, one also surrenders the guilt, the shame, the resentments and remorse. The purpose is to fully embrace rather than evade oneself. The reality of forgiveness already granted by God is concretized in these steps.

Restoration of integrity and dignity continues through the transformation process as the person works on and articulates other defects of character and asks God likewise to remove them. Having cleared the path of life which had been obstructed by the barriers of guilt, shame and remorse; the person now moves into the phase of restitution, not to God, but to other human beings. Restitution is not reimbursement, but responsible moving towards reconciliation. It is

action which accentuates the authenticity of true amendment of life.

Johnson states,

As he is able to make things up to other people and repay them, he restores himself. His self-image, so badly damaged during the course of the illness, is being repaired; his ego strength is being enhanced. He feels better about himself - which is to say, he is more self-accepting. While he is accepting forgiveness from another, he is being placed in a position where he can more easily and thoroughly forgive himself. His character conflicts can more easily be reduced. In turn, he is therefore better able to accept (to forgive) someone else.⁵³

This action is the same as the ecclesiastical prescription for penance which Luther sought to keep within the church. Contrition for sin was linked with a concomitant action of restitution. Its practice fell into disuse because of its susceptibility to corruption and misunderstanding. Nevertheless, as noted in the references within the Lutheran confessions, its practice was encouraged. It is 'fleshed out' in the eighth and ninth steps to recovery in A.A. and Al-Anon.

H. SIMUL JUSTUS ET PECCATOR

The relationship of sin and justification as they are set in juxtaposition theologically came to exquisite expression in Luther's dialectical affirmation that human beings are simul justus, simul peccator - at one and the same time justified and sinful. This forms the fundamental anthropology for Lutheran theology. The decisive victory over sin has been accomplished in the cross and resurrection, but the final victory has not been attained. This kind of anthropology precludes on the one hand a perfectionism which fails to give credence to the reality of sin and the human condition on the one hand; but it

⁵³Vernon Johnson, 109.

also saves the person from complete despair in that the 'justifying' act of reconciliation has been accomplished by God. This continues to stay in effect in spite of the human condition. The dialectical tension remains intact which is according to Tillich,

...the core of the Lutheran revolution, the in-spite-of character is decisive for the whole Christian message as the salvation from despair about one's guilt. It is actually the only way to overcome the anxiety of guilt; it enables man to look away from himself and his state of estrangement and self-destruction to the justifying act of God. He who looks at himself and tries to measure his relation to God by his achievements increases his estrangement and the anxiety of guilt and despair.⁵⁴

Theologically this position addresses the issue of continuity versus discontinuity discussed earlier. The process of transformation addresses that which is radically new, the discontinuity with the past; but it also takes cognizance of that which continues, the reality of the human condition. Allowance is made for the reality of finitude while at the same time addressing the issue of freedom and the future. The struggle continues against the insurmountable odds which lead to despair; but a struggle in hope and with confidence. Another expression which captures the essence of this anthropology is to speak in the eschatological framework of the 'now, but not yet.' The realization of God's justifying act in the present is a proclamation of 'good news' concerning the in-breaking of the Kingdom; but it is not yet fully or finally realized until the eschaton. Thus Heije Faber writes concerning this theologoumenon,

The central theme is rather that we are balanced between liberty and bondage, between authentic existence and inauthentic existence, the experience of being, not as firm ground beneath our feet, but as a

⁵⁴Tillich, II, 178.

dialectical 'letting go' and simultaneous seeking for something to hold on to at the edge of an abyss, where we go on without having any clear direction.⁵⁵

The dialectic, however is not an insoluble paradox, therefore it is a theological attempt at expressing reality without subscribing to an absolute dualism which engenders anxiety and encourages despair. Thus even after the transformation process has been set in motion and the person is declared just by God and has received and appropriated forgiveness, the estrangement in Tillich's terms continues to manifest itself.

This anthropology and theological tenet resonates strongly with the person who is recovering from alcoholism. The joy and serenity which comes with sobriety needs to take cognizance of reality. The person is still human, subject to the foibles, frailties and failures indigenous to the human condition. It is easy to 'slip' in thinking and drinking. Thus Step Ten in the recovery process admonishes the person to continue to take inventory because it recognizes the reality of the human situation.

Seward Hiltner links the A.A. experience after conversion to the Lutheran anthropology espoused by Martin Luther that human beings are simul justus et peccator. Hiltner writes

As the A.A. experience clearly shows, what happens from then on is likely to depend, in a complexly interrelated way, upon: (1) accurate understanding of the immediate enemy from which deliverance has been won; (2) social support that transcends one's natural psychological defenses; (3) a discipline which is not prevented by pride from looking ever and again at the source of deliverance, and

⁵⁵Heije Faber, Psychology of Religion (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1975) 140-141.

which is aware that it has been saved in 'principle' rather than 'all over.' This is, in truth, a spelling out of what Martin Luther meant by saying that the redeemed man in Christ is simul justus et peccator.⁵⁶

Keller links together the ambiguities which life confronts the recovering alcoholic and his/her family with in the course of this process. The ambiguities in life, both external and internal need not overwhelm the person. There is now the acknowledgement of God and of God's grace which enables one to grow and which also grants a peace which passes all of human understanding.⁵⁷

There is imaged for the recovering alcoholic and his/her family a theology which embraces reality. There is the knowledge as Keller indicates that the God who has redeemed humankind from the pit of despair and the consequences of estrangement trods the path with the person in the recovery process. The person is enabled to walk by faith in a Power greater than self who strengthens and supports him/her in the midst of life's exigencies as well as excitement.

I. SANCTIFICATION - THE PROGRESSIVE NATURE OF TRANSFORMATION

Lutheran theology describes the ongoing life of faith under the rubric of sanctification. The confessions discuss this under the categories of the new obedience and good works. The Augsburg Confession succinctly states,

Our churches also teach that this faith is bound to bring forth good fruits and that it is necessary to do the good works commanded by

⁵⁶Seward Hiltner, "Toward a Theology of Conversion in the Light of Psychology," Pastoral Psychology 17:166 (1966) 38.

⁵⁷Keller, 6-7.

God. We must do so because it is God's will and not because we rely on such works to merit justification before God.⁵⁸

Similar affirmations of this position are articulated in the rest of the confessions as well.⁵⁹ The new obedience and the fruits which are produced evidence the power of the Holy Spirit as operative in the lives of people.

Tillich stated the Regeneration and Justification essentially are one as both describe the reunion of what is estranged. He says with regard to Sanctification,

Sanctification is distinguished from both of them as a process is distinguished from the event in which it is initiated....Sanctification is the process in which the power of the New Being transforms personality and community, inside and outside the church. Both the individual Christian and the church, both the religious and the secular realm, are objects of the sanctifying work of the divine Spirit, who is the actuality of the New Being.⁶⁰

Sanctification is the process according to Tillich and the work of the Spirit is not confined to ecclesiastical structures. Therefore the work of the Spirit can be acknowledged 'outside' of the church in the 'secular' realm which gives wide latitude to an understanding of the Spirit and the Spirit's work.

The 'turning point' for this whole process has been called conversion with its concomitant action of surrender in this paper. The entire process from inception onward is termed transformation and is seen as a life-long process which is highlighted by chaitotic times and significant occasions of rising consciousness and awareness of the

⁵⁸Tappert, 31-32.

⁵⁹Tappert, 41-46, 226-229, 315, 345, 415-420, 475-476 and 551-558.

⁶⁰Tillich, II, 179-180.

Spiritual Presence breaking into existence. What most writers call conversion, I would call transformation. For the sake of clarity, the definition of conversion is limited to the 'turning point' or event which gives expression most vividly to the transformation process. This is not necessarily a once-for-all occasion, but may be and often is repeated throughout the life of the individual as s/he experiences the consciousness and awareness of the Spirit's action in his/her life; an action which constantly renews and transforms.

This semantic distinction proves helpful both theologically and practically. Tillich says with regard to the preparatory time before the event in relationship to the event itself,

But conversion is not necessarily a momentary event; it is in most cases a long process which has been going on unconsciously long before it breaks into consciousness, giving the impression of a sudden, unexpected, and overwhelming crisis. It is questionable that such experiences are numerous and show most conspicuously the ecstatic character of the Spiritual Presence, but they do not - as pietism thinks - constitute the essence of conversion.⁶¹

Had the word transformation been used for conversion and conversion used in place of ecstatic character, Tillich's expression would be in conformity with that suggested in this paper.

Leon Salzman substantiates this contention from his study of conversion which was primarily an empirical endeavor, but which lends credence to this contention. Most change is gradual in nature though its expression in some instances appears to be instantaneous. There is normally an incubation period before a precipitating event dramatically impacts the person. The event may bring about significant changes, but

⁶¹Tillich, III, 219.

these likely would not have occurred without preparatory events and experiences.⁶²

Paul Johnson describes the process following the conversion event as religious growth which must follow the conversion itself. "To mistake religious conversion as a once-for-all-nothing-more-to-do finality will surely be to go down to defeat and bring discredit upon the genuine validity of that conversion."⁶³ He elaborates on this point by saying that there must be concomitant growth and continual change and development for the conversion experience to claim validity.⁶⁴ Had Johnson used the word transformation rather than religious growth, his description would be identical to the definition proffered in this paper. As has been indicated previously, utilizing the word growth does not express adequately the activity and in-dwelling of the Spirit. In Lutheran theology it is the Spirit of God which alone can accomplish not only the development and maturation of a person's faith, but which can effect a dynamic transformation in the lives of people. There is a newness or novelty which creatively comes forth not as a natural outgrowth alone of one's personage, but a New Being as Tillich characterizes the process of transformation and sanctification.

The sanctification process is the ongoing expression of the transformation process. Gillespie accurately states that,

⁶²Leon Salzman, "Types of Religious Conversion," Pastoral Psychology 17:166 (1966) 10.

⁶³Paul Johnson, 126.

⁶⁴Paul Johnson, 128.

The process is never complete, for man is always in movement, yet it brings an intense change affecting man where he is most affected, at the center of his being, at the core of his life.⁶⁵

Justification and sanctification are in Lutheran theology held in dynamic juxtaposition. The Spirit of God is operative in the individual bringing about the new obedience which issues in the fruits of the Spirit, but the person is still simul justus et peccator giving occasion to sin as well as expression of complete humanity. Justification gives expression to anthropological continuity, sanctification to anthropological discontinuity with the creative potential for the New Being. The transformation process with its concomitant dynamics dialectically continues through life and finds its only ultimate resolution in God.

Oskar Kupky notes in the ebb and flow of doubt and faith as coupled with new experiences, the person processively develops and matures. Final inner tranquility comes by surrender to God. One finally comes to the conclusion with St. Augustine that 'Cor meum irrequietum est, donec requiescat Domine in Te.'⁶⁶

Sanctification as the processive expression of transformation following the conversion experience or 'turning point' gives accurate expression theologically to those who are recovering from alcoholism. Whether it is the alcoholic or a member of the family, there is a gradual building up of experiences, events and episodes which are

⁶⁵V. Bailey Gillespie, Religious Conversion and Personal Identify (Birmingham: Religious Education Press, 1979) 113.

⁶⁶Oskar Kupky, "Main Outlines of Religious Development," in Orlo Strunk, Jr. (ed.) Readings in Psychology of Religion (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1959) 154.

antecedent to the eventual crisis which precipitates a conversion experience for that person. It becomes clear that a substantive change involves a radical reversal in lifestyle and self perception as well as a new orientation towards life. The transformation process continues as ever new discoveries are made and the person continues to be transformed at the very depth of his/her being. Theologically the affirmation is made that this is the manner in which the Spirit of God operates in the lives and experiences of human beings. Hiltner links the process just described with the work of A.A. He says,

To believe securely that behavior, including religious behavior, has antecedents can free us from the tyranny of capriciousness in attempting to interpret the way in which religion operates. It can give us the key, for example, to understanding the depth of the experience of many alcoholics as their lives are changed through joining Alcoholics Anonymous. It can enable us, on psychological grounds, to challenge the assertion of the superficial psychiatrists that the experience does not reach deep because it does not start with genetic insights.⁶⁷

The net result of the entire process is a revamped view of reality which engages the person in developing new images and metaphors to characterize the nature of life.

J. IMAGES OF THE TRANSFORMED LIFE

As in the Pauline literature surveyed earlier in the 1st chapter, the Christian faith gives rise to new images which express the reality of new life. Consideration will be given to three images of the transformed life which are most pertinent theologically for this paper.

⁶⁷Seward Hiltner, "The Psychological Understanding of Religion," in Strunk, 92-93.

1. Resurrection

Luther in his discussion of baptism uses the death-resurrection motif as a metaphor for the new life. He is processive in his understanding of baptism at this juncture affirming that baptism,

...signifies that the old Adam in us, together with all sins and evil lusts, should be drowned by daily sorrow and repentance and be put to death, and that the new man should come forth daily and rise up, cleansed and righteous, to live forever in God's presence.⁶⁸

Luther uses Romans 6:4 as a scriptural basis for this affirmation.

Thus the new life is a 'daily' experience of death and resurrection. It is a radical change which utilizes the imagery of death and resurrection. There is however the reality that in spite of the substantive change, this is still the same person. "This is the continuity of reason in the discontinuity of faith."⁶⁹

There is a constant struggle and battle, yet each response to new life witnesses to the reality of new life imaged as resurrection or new birth.

Theologically this new life is brought about by the power of God and is not a creation of capability within the person himself/herself. Paul Johnson speaks about this great power as coming "...through the interpersonal relations of a social and creative universe."⁷⁰

This new life can be a very frightening kind of experience. It represents a lure into the unknown future, but also represents the relinquishment of the past. Martin writes,

⁶⁸Tappert, 349.

⁶⁹Charles W. Kegley (ed.) The Theology of Emil Brunner (New York: Macmillan, 1962) 64.

⁷⁰Paul Johnson, 129.

Some people think death is the most frightening experience for the human being, but it's not. Birth is the ultimate terror, because the familiar has been torn away and you're thrust out into the unending and the unknown.⁷¹

This is precisely what the person is sensing in the recovery process from alcoholism, whether s/he is the one afflicted or affected. This is a new experience of birth and can be terrifying because of risk, unfamiliarity and uncertainty. The whole phenomenon is nothing less than bringing new life out of death. This is strange, alien and frightening territory for the newcomer in A.A. This is the Saturday eve prelude to Sunday morning resurrection.⁷²

This metaphorical expression gives occasion to concretely 'flesh out' a theology of resurrection in relationship to the transformed life. Another image which expresses the content of the resurrected life is that of the New Being.

2. New Being

The image of the New Being is one which has captured the attention of Paul Tillich as being most expressive of those who are in the process of transformation. He says,

Obviously, the characteristics of the New Being are the opposite of those of estrangement, namely, faith instead of unbelief, surrender instead of hubris, love instead of concupiscence.⁷³

He seeks to guard against a purely subjective understanding of these processes and looks upon the New Being as a state of being, simul

⁷¹Martin, 173.

⁷²Martin, 132.

⁷³Tillich, II, 177.

justus even as sin is a state of being, simul peccator. Christ has inaugurated a new age and the individual enters it and participates in it and is reborn in the process. "The objective reality of the New Being precedes subjective participation in it."⁷⁴ Thus the message of a new reality is that of turning from the old to embrace the new. Lest this become a Schwaermer mentality to use Luther's phrase, Tillich says,

Regeneration (and conversion) understood in this way, have little in common with the attempt to create emotional reactions in appealing to an individual in his subjectivity. Regeneration is the state of having been drawn into the new reality manifest in Jesus as the Christ. The subjective consequences are fragmentary and ambiguous and not the basis for claiming participation in the Christ.⁷⁵

This new being is marked by certain distinctions and attributes which include being knit to God and others in love. This new person accepts the obligation of serving both God and fellow human beings as a grateful servant.⁷⁶

Those recovering from alcoholism have often used this theological terminology in expressing themselves, "I feel like a new person" or "I feel like I have been born again." Even though this may be a subjective expression, it has its basis in an objective awareness of having been granted a new lease on life. After the initial flush of excitement and enthusiasm occasioned by this significant stage in the transformation process, the recovering person reacts not with ecstatic emotional highs, but with a quiet, but real sense of gratitude that God

⁷⁴Tillich, II, 177.

⁷⁵Tillich, II, 177.

⁷⁶Paterson, 40.

in grace has done for him/her what s/he could not do for himself/herself. It is the sense of being grasped by the reality of God as opposed to grasping for the reality of God.

The New Being brings with it a sense of peace and serenity. It is for the alcoholic a new life of sobriety and sanity rather than the former life of inebriation and insanity. Martin defines sanity in this way, "Sanity is the measure to which one is able to live a useful and reasonably contented life."⁷⁷ Contentment is possible because a dynamic and living relationship with God has been established, a relationship which is nourished both by individual and corporate communication with God. The eleventh step of A.A. is that the person makes a conscious effort through prayer and meditation to maintain and nurture his/her conscious contact with God. This new being now has a viable identity. Woodruff writes,

Christian conversion enables the alcoholic to find the basis of his identity. He is converted from a negative to a positive identity as a child of God. Upon this basis he can begin to find what his attributes are and what others can mean to him. He can move from a self-destructive to a constructive course in life. The development of a positive identity undergirds his sobriety and allows him to enjoy a full and free life.⁷⁸

Life lived in the metaphorical image of the 'new being' is life lived in serenity in spite of what is happening in the world. There is a realization that the old has passed away and that the new has come.

3. Love

The image which perhaps best expresses the reality of the

⁷⁷Martin, 168.

⁷⁸Woodruff, 72-73.

transformation process is that of life lived in love. Tillich is again helpful in defining the nature of this new life as love. He says,

Whereas faith is the state of being grasped by the Spiritual Presence, love is the state of being taken by the Spiritual Presence into the transcendent unity of unambiguous life.⁷⁹

This definition guards against the popular understanding of love as primarily emotion or subjective appropriation of truth. The concept of love is much more encompassing. It involves according to Tillich the person's total being including the physical, emotional and spiritual dimensions. Tillich defines love as, "...the whole being's movement toward another being to overcome existential separation."⁸⁰

Love is understood theologically as being the essence of God whose agape disposition towards human beings is qualitatively unique.

In the case of agape, the first quality is evident in its acceptance of the object of love without restrictions; the second quality is disclosed in agape's holding fast to this acceptance in spite of the estranged, profanized, and demonized state of its objects, and the third quality is seen in agape's expectation of the re-establishment of holiness, greatness, and dignity of the object of love through its accepting him.⁸¹

Tillich states that all of this can be said about love as agape before any personal or social actualization of love has occurred. Human beings are incapable of this kind of love apart from the energizing power of the Spirit of God whose gift is to make possible this kind of transforming love in the lives of people.

The hymn to love in the Pauline corpus (I Cor. 13) is an

⁷⁹Tillich, III, 134.

⁸⁰Tillich, III, 136.

⁸¹Tillich, III, 138.

expression of the shape and form of this newly transformed life. It is all inclusive and as such gives rise to the possibility of true community and acceptance of oneself, others and God.

It is the pervasive and persuasive power of love which shapes the image of the new life for the recovering alcoholic and his/her family. Of necessity, this begins with the self, moves to others and ultimately to God. It is important to distinguish between love for self and the narcissistic and egocentric passion for one's own satisfaction and the love for self which acknowledges that one is a creation of God and therefore worthy of love. Stated in another way, "God does not love us because we were so worthy; on the contrary, we are so worthy because God loves us."⁸²

The alcoholic and often the members of his/her family have practiced and experienced a caricature of real love. It was a love which was not only conditional, but was also a love which was virtually impossible because of self-hatred. Love in the healthy sense for the self was a prerequisite before love for others and God could be authentic. As Paterson states, it,

Moreover love of God cannot become the master-principle without inspiring respect for one's own self as bearing the image of God, and embodying a unique thought of the Creator.⁸³

A new understanding of love, not as self-indulgence, but as freedom within limits emerges. This self limitation is not experienced as

⁸²Helmut Thielicke, Death and Life (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1970) xxv.

⁸³Paterson, 44.

confining, but conducive to real growth.⁸⁴

Love by its very definition and nature involves and requires community. In Christian theology, the expression of that love and its implementation is to be carried out in the context of the church. For the person who is recovering from alcoholism that therapeutic community is A.A. for the one drinking and Al-Anon for those who are a part of that family system. Rather than envisioning these two communities as separate and distinct, it is of help to the alcoholic family to see both the self-help groups as well as the church as being communities where love can be given and received. The transition for the alcoholic is to move from the love of a chemical to the love of a community.

Moreover, for the family or society to remove alcohol forcibly, or to encourage the alcoholic's removing it without adequate emotional and spiritual replacements, is like the man who left an empty house after having swept the devil from it to have seven worse ones come in to possess it.⁸⁵

The emotional and spiritual vacuum is filled by relationships of love within the community. It is in community that this new understanding of love is enabled to reach out to others. Even though A.A. and the church are two distinct communities, there is a commonality of purpose in reaching out to those who are in need. This reaching out is incorporated in the twelfth step of A.A. and is indigenous to the mission of the church as well.

In giving consideration to the theological tenets of transformation, it becomes more readily apparent how these are

⁸⁴Keller, 9.

⁸⁵E.A. Verdery, "Pastoral Care of the Alcoholic's Family After Sobriety," Pastoral Psychology 13:123 (1962) 32.

translated into the dynamics of transformation as experienced in the recovery from alcoholism. Methodologically the transition has been made from theology and a given theological tradition to illustrate the manner in which this engages the psychodynamics of alcoholism even as in the earlier chapters, the psychological dynamics were reflected upon theologically. The full hermeneutical circle has been made in reflecting upon the psychological and theological dynamics of transformation in the recovery from the disease of alcoholism. Perhaps the parallelism can be most graphically depicted in this manner.

<u>Theological Tenet</u>	<u>Dynamics</u>	<u>Step in Recovery</u>
Human Condition	Powerlessness, State of Sin, Entrapment	Step 1
Divine Reality	Spiritual Presence, Power Greater Than Self	Step 2
Faith	Trust, Surrender, Giving In	Step 3
Justification/Grace	Acceptance, Acknowledging Condition	Step 4
Forgiveness	Confession, Nature of Wrongs, Absolution	Step 5
Repentance	Self-Examination, Defects of Character	Steps 6-7
Restoration/Restitution	Reconciliation, Amends	Steps 8-9
Simul justus/simul peccator	Human situation, Continuity/Discontinuity	Step 10
Sanctification	Prayer, Meditation, Processive Nature	Step 11
Images of New Life	New Being, Community, Resurrection, Love	Step 12

This schema suggests some of the parallel dynamics between the theological tenets of the Christian faith as understood within the context of Lutheranism and the manner in which the steps to recovery incorporate these same dynamics. While there cannot be exact and immediate interchange between the theological tenets and the psychological dynamics, the parallel process is nonetheless striking and gives the pastor an opportunity to translate theological categories into psychological terminology and psychological dynamics into theological terminology.

In evaluating the recovery process in the A.A. and Al-Anon tradition from a theological perspective, the program portrays a solid spiritual and theological foundation which is part and parcel of the Christian tradition. One of the reasons the implicit and explicit theology of the self-help groups parallels that of evangelical Lutheranism is the influence of Frank Buchman, a Swiss-Lutheran pastor. His influence on the Oxford Movement out of which A.A. eventuated is a fascinating story as noted by Clinebell.⁸⁶ His influence could readily explain the close ties theologically. The program lacks the fulness of the Christian theological perspective from a Lutheran vantage point in at least three major places.

First of all, the permissive theology of the recovery program is not outside the Lutheran purview, for as Tillich indicated, the Spirit is active in institutions and structures outside of the church. Lacking in the recovery process however is a Christology. While many

⁸⁶Howard J. Clinebell, Jr., Some Religious Approaches to the Problem of Alcoholism (Ann Arbor: University Microfilms, 1954) 241-288.

people who belong to A.A. and Al-Anon are avowed Christians and subscribe to that perspective and incorporate in their own minds a developed Christology; that is missing in the official annals of A.A. and Al-Anon. A Christological inclusion would mean pragmatically religious exclusion for those who do not embrace the Christian faith as historically and confessionally articulated.

Theologically, the addition of a Christological dimension would give the Christian alcoholic who is following the program the added dimension of an incarnational theology which identifies the reality of God in the human process. The immanence of God has been traditionally expressed in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth who in the Pauline image of kenosis, emptied Himself and assumed human flesh, walking the road of the human predicament and thus identifying with the creatureliness of human beings. Such a theological perspective is pastorally helpful for dealing with the alcoholic and his/her family.

Secondly, the recovery program lacks from a Lutheran perspective the sacramental dimension of healing and help. The sacrament of Baptism is a theologically powerful symbol of the preeminence of grace. Even in the darkest moments of one's existence, the promissio Dei remains intact as bestowed in Holy Baptism. Luther repeatedly reminded himself during his 'Anfechtungen' or spiritual temptations that he was baptized. This was an objective reminder of security during subjective periods of insecurity and doubt.

Likewise the Eucharist as a sacrament is a concrete and tangible sign of the reality of grace and forgiveness. As a communal sacrament,

it verifies the reality of the Spiritual Presence or the 'Real Presence' as Luther interpreted it, in and among the people of God. Its significance as fellowship is calculated to break through the isolation and estrangement experienced between God and human beings and between people and other people. It affords a visible affirmation of reconciliation, community, acceptance and new life from those who participate. It would and does speak most meaningfully to alcoholics and their families as the dynamics of faith are concretized and ritualized in the church.

Finally, the recovery program lacks an explicit theology of the Word which is also central to Lutheran theology. While the Scriptures are not disparaged, nor is their reading discouraged; subscription to them as a whole would again preclude non-Christian participation. As has been pointed out in this paper, images and metaphors from the Scripture have been borrowed and utilized by the recovery programs. Full scale acceptance of the Scriptures as the annals of the Divine encounter with the human situation is not addressed. The person of Jesus is lifted up by most members of these recovery programs and the Lord's Prayer is almost always prayed as a close to meetings. The Lord's Prayer, however, has no Christological content nor a specifically Christian theology and hence is likely found acceptable for use in spite of its origin and connection with the New Testament.

Theologically, the Christian faith has as much and more to offer than the program of self-help utilized by A.A. and Al-Anon. It offers the gift of salvation not only from the addiction and effects of alcoholism, but addresses more broadly the whole human condition

whether one is addicted or not.

However, the purpose of this chapter was to discuss the parallels in the process from a theological perspective. It seems reasonable to conclude that the recovery program utilized by A.A. and Al-Anon has a solid theological base and is an effective way in which the Spirit of God does indeed work in the world of those afflicted and affected by alcoholism.

PART FIVE

TRANSFORMATION - THE ROLE OF THE PASTOR

CHAPTER XI

PASTORAL PREPARATION AND PARTICIPATION IN TRANSFORMATION

A. INTRODUCTION

The dissertation has focused on the psychological and theological dynamics of transformation and the manner in which they are integrated in the recovery process. As these dynamics were explicated in the initial four parts of the dissertation, reference was often made to the potential role of the pastor in this process. It is my conviction that the informed and involved pastor can play a unique and strategic role in his/her ministry to the alcoholic and family. As one who is called to minister to the entire family of God, including the social outcasts, which alcoholics and their families tend to become; it is incumbent from both a theological as well as practical perspective that the pastor take this dimension of his/her ministry seriously.

This chapter will address two specific issues in relationship to the pastor who chooses to involve himself/herself as a participant in the transformation process. The initial focus of attention will be upon the personal and professional preparation which the pastor makes as s/he engages in the ministry of transformation. Theologically it was affirmed in the last chapter that transformation is the work of God's Spirit. The Spirit utilizes people to accomplish the tasks of ministry. It therefore behooves the pastor to be personally and professionally prepared to function as an effective instrument of the Spirit in the ministry of transformation.

Secondly, this chapter will address the specific role of the pastor in his/her transformation ministry as it relates to personal involvement with the alcoholic and family system. Personal and professional preparation presupposes that the pastor is willing to practice what s/he has learned in ministry. The author will suggest five major roles which the informed and involved pastor can assume in his/her ministry.

B. PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL PREPARATION

Effective pastoral care initially involves the pastor's self understanding in relationship to persons, in this instance the alcoholic and his/her family. The pastor's approach to people is determined in large part by his/her attitudes towards other people which in turn is shaped primarily by his/her self perception. The twin foci of attention in pastoral care must be the person(s) whom one is dealing with as well as an awareness of who one is as a person in relationship to other people. This is particularly crucial in working with the alcoholic and his/her family. Consideration of the pastor's personal disposition becomes the starting point and foundation upon which a comprehensive view of pastoral ministry with the alcoholic and family can be established.

1. Pastoral Attitudes

The question must be posed, does the pastor find any sense of identification with the alcoholic and his/her family? A lack of identification can severely curtail if not preclude effective working

with the alcoholic and family in the transformation process. Verdery writes,

The alcoholic is one who is caught between the pull of two selves and is currently experiencing the real meaning of Paul's words, 'I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate.' (Rom. 7:15) I have a growing personal feeling that, until we as clergymen have an existential awareness of this struggle within ourselves, we will be definitely limited in our ability to work effectively with alcoholics and their families.¹

An identification with and a willingness to admit one's own humanity is the first foundational component in effective ministry to alcoholics and their families. This means for the pastor that s/he also needs to come to terms with his/her own disposition towards being egocentric, omnipotent, irresponsible and defiant in relationship to other people. These are not attitudes which are the sole possession of the alcoholic or his/her family. Keller poignantly states,

All too often, and without even knowing it, we come to God as we think we ought to be or as we like to think we are, rather than as we really are. We can so easily imagine ourselves more sinful or less sinful than some other person - and quite often less sinful than the alcoholic.²

This disposition is as insidious as it is subtle.

Intellectually we affirm the solidarity of the human condition, but actions and attitudes overtly and covertly betray the contrary. Discriminatory distinctions between the pastor and the alcoholic and/or family which s/he may wish to work with will erect impregnable barriers to effective ministry. We need to see ourselves in the alcoholic. We may not be victimized by the disease of alcoholism, but many of us exhibit obsessive compulsive behavior which is parallel to the

¹E.A. Verdery, "The Clergy and Alcoholism," in Ruth Fox (ed.) Alcoholism (New York: Random House, 1955) 273.

²John Keller, Ministering to Alcoholics (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1966) 13.

alcoholic's malady.³

Fred B. Ford is adamant about the importance of identification and mutuality. He says,

The truth is that we need to know that we too are mortal, that we too have great inadequacies, that we too have missed many of life's good turns, that we too have sinned and come short of the glory of God. We say these things of ourselves easily but if we really know them in genuine humility then that 'third voice' will inevitably speak in accents that the alcoholic is willing to hear. This I regard as a qualification second to none.⁴

Both admitting and actually believing that as a pastor one is no stranger to having feet of clay is a valuable asset.

A second important pastoral attitude is the motivation for working with alcoholics and their families. Being honest about one's personal and professional ego needs is absolutely essential. If the pastor views working with the alcoholic and family as a way to enhance his/her own sense of credibility and worth, one of two things will happen. Either the alcoholic or family member will be attracted to the self-serving, self-confident authority figure and establish a pathological dependency; or the alcoholic or family member will perceive the motivation for rendering pastoral aid and abandon the relationship. Pastoral care can become a means to an end for oneself rather than an end in itself which seeks to serve those who suffer. In this connection Ford writes,

³David A. Stewart, Thirst for Freedom (Toronto: Musson, 1960) 187.

⁴Fred B. Ford, "Dear Parson: An Open Letter About Your Alcoholic," in his The Alcoholic (TS) (Newton Centre, MA: Andover Newton Department of Psychology, n.d.) 59.

Surely it is quite obvious that there is no surer way of breaking rapport than to come to a session with an alcoholic so full of yourself that you really have no room for consideration of him. Within himself he quietly says of you, 'He's not really interested in me and he doesn't understand' and maybe you're all through.⁵

Another way of saying this is that professional and personal pride precludes positive participation in the transformation process. Not only is this attitude detrimental to the alcoholic and the pastor, but it also invites great disillusionment and disappointment because pastoral expectations are too high and s/he may quickly become impatient because of a lack of projected results.

The motivation for health and healing on the part of the pastor of necessity requires a great measure of altruism. The pastor's position needs to affirm the one who is in the transformation process.

The losses are his losses, the victories and new-found satisfactions are also his. You are not disinterested but if your ego is much involved in his making a starring success than I must very reluctantly tell you that the alcoholic is not for you.⁶

Likewise it is important to be able to accept and communicate to the alcoholic and his/her family that they are engaged in the transformation process for themselves. A firm pastoral stance at this point is critical. If the pastor senses that the alcoholic or member of the family is attempting to please family members or the pastor, that motivation needs to be promptly confronted. It is indicative of a compliant and submissive attitude and does not aid in helping that individual relate in a mature way to others.⁷ A plea for

⁵Ford, 68.

⁶Ford, 76.

⁷Ford, 78.

perceptivity to the parishoner/patient's needs as well as personal and professional perceptivity on the part of the pastor to his/her needs is being made. The informed pastor who is aware of these bilateral dynamics has made great strides towards working effectively with the alcoholic and his/her family.

A third concern to be addressed in terms of pastoral attitude is the pastor's position with regard to alcohol usage, alcoholism and the alcoholic. These areas are obviously interconnected, but they bear investigation by the pastor as to the manner in which they interface with his/her own experience and thus influence his/her practice of ministry.

An attitude analysis beginning with the impressions and ideas assimilated over the years is an important exercise for any pastor who wishes to work effectively with alcoholics and their families. The inventory might include the following questions for the pastor to honestly respond to as s/he contemplates work in this area.

- 1) What remembrances of alcohol usage remain from the family of origin?
- 2) What was the familial and cultural mindset with respect to drinking, drunkenness and drunken behavior?
- 3) What prohibitions and permissions were granted in relationship to the usage of beverage alcohol?
- 4) What personal involvement was there and is there with regard to alcohol consumption and/or experiences of inebriation?
- 5) What images come to mind when the word 'alcoholic' is used?
- 6) What if any moral, ethical or theological concerns come to mind with respect to alcohol and alcoholism?

7) What if any ecclesiastical position or tradition is embraced by one's denomination? Is this position congruent with one's own personal position?

8) What cultural, ecclesiastical and personal values are associated with the usage of alcohol?

These questions when answered honestly will give a profile of one's attitudes towards the usage of alcohol, alcoholism and the alcoholic. It would seem judicious that the pastor request an attitude inventory which is available at most chemical dependency treatment centers. A careful reading of such an inventory will reveal some of the hidden attitudes which the pastor may not be conscious of in his/her life. Such dispositions can then be confronted and worked through or accepted as personal limitations within which one operates.

Because of prior experiences within the family or personal encounters with others who have had problems with alcohol, the pastor may come to the realization that s/he is not capable of the objectivity and disposition necessary to work effectively with the alcoholic and his/her family. It is important to recognize that limitation if it should exist and act accordingly. Vernelle Fox addresses this issue from the wider perspective of all people who may be involved in ministering to the alcoholic. She writes,

In our experience there are two groups of people, regardless of professional background, who are unable to function either comfortably or adequately in a therapeutic community for alcoholics. These are individuals who are either too rigid or too inclined to over-identify and become over-involved. Both groups invariably wind up relating to the patient's drinking rather than to the patient. It is often difficult for us to determine the

existence of these qualities in prospective employees.⁸

The issue at stake is to determine whether the pastor with his/her attitudes aids or hinders the transformation process. It is recognized that many families afflicted with alcoholism will seek out a clergyperson for consultation. Being aware of one's attitudes, disposition, capabilities and limitations will be an important asset for the pastor in making this determination. Ordination provides no guarantee of success or answers, neither does a sound theological education. The pastor must come to terms with his/her own sense of identity and integration of theology into the praxis of ministry. It is only in possessing oneself that a pastor is able to freely give to another.⁹

If the pastor has a clear understanding of his/her attitudes, s/he then is ready for the next step in preparation for becoming involved in the process of transformation which is to become informed about the dynamics of the disease.

2. Pastoral Comprehension of Disease and Recovery Dynamics

The old maxim that 'ignorance is bliss' is advice gone amiss for the pastor who desires to work with the alcoholic and family. Sound and accurate data and information concerning the dynamics of the disease and recovery is imperative. It is judicious to bear in mind as pastors that lives are literally at stake when dealing with

⁸Vernelle Fox, "Differences in a Therapeutic Community," in Ruth Fox, 167.

⁹Verdery, 280.

alcoholism. A basic assumption of professionals in the field of alcoholism is that alcoholism is a progressively fatal disease and that unless interrupted will ultimately lead to a premature death. Thus it behooves the responsible clergyperson to become properly and adequately informed.

This process can and hopefully will begin during the years of preparation for the pastorate in theological schools. The pervasiveness of chemical addiction in contemporary society guarantees the fact that the pastor will be faced with this situation in his/her parish. The pastoral care and ministry department of theological schools need to provide training with regard to the personal, psychological and theological dynamics of disease and recovery. Efforts in that direction will insure the fact that seminarians who are about to be placed in parish settings will have had some preparation for dealing with this critical issue.

If necessity is the mother of invention, personal confrontation can be the catalyst for fulfilling a need. Often times it is only as the new pastor becomes involved in the parish setting that s/he will realize the need for greater understanding and comprehension of the disease and recovery dynamics. A number of suggestions may be proffered at this point to aid the pastor in dealing with that deficiency.

First of all s/he may immerse herself/himself in the available literature on the subject. There are currently a multiplicity of books, pamphlets and papers which have been written on the subject and are available in many libraries. Alcoholics Anonymous World Services

Incorporated as well as major foundations such as Hazelden and the Johnson Institute among others can provide accurate and helpful data for the pastor. Subscription to periodicals such as the Grapevine, the official publication of Alcoholics Anonymous, or the Journal on Alcohol Studies are important sources of practical as well as technical material on the subject. Alcoholism affects the entire person as well as the entire family or significant social system and recent literature in the field is beginning to address the issue from that systemic perspective.

Secondly, the pastor can gain accurate data from institutes and workshops designed for aiding him/her in understanding the disease process. Among the nationally known institutes are the Rutgers School of Alcohol Studies (formerly the Yale School) and the Utah School of Alcohol Studies. Many states provide annual conferences involving training for clergy. Regional and local workshops sponsored by treatment facilities is another important resource for the pastor. This enables him/her to gain valuable information as well as making important contacts with professionals in the field.

A third source of information are the treatment centers themselves. Most centers are very open to pastors who have a desire to learn. Attendance at in-treatment lectures, movies and tapes as well as involvement in one-to-one and group counseling can be a rich source of information for the pastor. The pastor who chooses to involve himself/herself to a more significant extent can become involved in clinical pastoral education. This is perhaps one of the most significant ways of preparing for pastoral involvement because it not

only provides accurate and important data and teaching skills in dealing with alcoholics and their families, but it also gives the pastor or the theological student an opportunity to engage in personal growth and awareness in the process.

A fourth source of data available to the pastor is attendance at A.A. and Al-Anon meetings wherein first-hand exposure to people who are wrestling with the disease and the recovery process can be observed. In many respects this is the most valuable source of information and education because one is involved with real people who are actively involved with the disease. One can observe often times in the course of these meetings the transformation process at work.

Clergy are welcome at open A.A. meetings and Al-Anon meetings. These self-help groups see the clergyperson as an asset in the recovery process and are anxious to share and teach those pastors who are open and willing to learn. The atmosphere at such meetings is infectious as mutual sharing, love and concern are demonstrated for every person in attendance. Observation of and participation in this process may be the most helpful and stimulating source of exposure for the pastor.

3. Awareness of Community Attitudes and Resources

The final step of preparation for the pastor's participation in this process is to be aware of the community's attitude in relationship to alcohol, alcoholism and alcoholics. The second part of that awareness is to know what health care delivery and social services are available to the alcoholic and his/her family.

Most people have strong opinions with regard to alcohol and its

usage. The so-called 'wet-dry' controversy can be a volatile issue in some communities. Pastoral care involves getting the pulse of one's congregation and community with regard to the usage of alcohol in order to better understand people's attitudes and actions. The social attitudes are often determined by ethnic and cultural mores of the people. Sensitivity to these prevailing dispositions determines in part the strategy which the pastor may employ in addressing the issue.

Equally important is a determination of the community and congregation's attitude toward alcoholism. One can expect to find diversity of opinion, however, a general trend is usually evident in a given group. If most people see the issue as relating to sin, a weak will and calloused conscience; then one set of dynamics will prevail. If the people are accepting of the disease concept, its treatability and the possibility of transformation; then a different set of dynamics is at work. Pastoral strategizing is contingent on having a finger on the pulse of the community of faith. The pastor has a significant ministry in the transformation of social attitudes as well as the transformation of lives afflicted and affected by alcoholism.

A pastor is likewise well prepared to serve the alcoholics and their families in a community if s/he has logistical knowledge of the available resources in the area. This involves knowledge of available treatment centers; their admission processes, financial arrangements, philosophical and methodological approaches as well as their family programs. The location of and meeting times for Alcoholics Anonymous, Al-Anon, Alateen, and Alatot are important to have available. The names and addresses of other professionals who work in the field of

alcoholism is a valuable resource for reference and/or referral. An awareness of all programs whether primary or ancillary to the treatment of alcoholism as well as its prevention is helpful information to have at one's disposal.

Alcoholism is a complex disease which affects all aspects of the total person. Its presence likewise impacts families, churches and the entire community. The informed pastor needs as much information as s/he can assimilate with regard to his/her own attitudes, the attitudes of the people whom s/he is serving as well as an awareness of the availability of community resources for dealing with the disease on all levels.

C. PASTORAL ROLE IN RELATIONSHIP TO THE ALCOHOLIC AND FAMILY

As the pastor seeks to minister to the alcoholic and his/her family, certain prerequisites loom as being crucial in engaging the family system.

1. Communicating a Sense of Acceptance

Communicating a sense of acceptance is indigenous to all pastoral care and counseling, but is particularly critical in working with the alcoholic family system. Rejection and often times ridicule are constant traveling companions for those walking the path of alcoholism. Ford suggests that more important than doing for the alcoholic is being for him/her. This implies a disposition of acceptance rather than condescension, of understanding rather than moralizing. Ford writes,

You are not just a bag of moralisms, wisdom or even insight of the highest order. You are a person and this lone, guilt-laden, hostility-burdened, bewildered turner-away-from-life needs you as a person in relationship to him, real relationship.¹⁰

This means accepting the alcoholic and/or family member where s/he is rather than where we might want them to be. To do any less than accept them as they are is to communicate rejection. This does not imply that the pastor condones unacceptable behavior in the family system, but s/he does accept it as reality and begins at that point.

Theologically this means incarnating the reality of grace. If the pastor has appropriated a sense of grace in his/her life in terms of transformation, then it becomes possible to aid in appropriating it in relationship to other people. The pastor who is easily shocked by bizarre and sordid behavior will likely communicate if not overtly then covertly a rejection of the person and thus preclude significant involvement with that person. Alcoholics and families have sensitive antennae for picking up judgmentalism, moralism and rejection. Acceptance initially may be giving the alcoholic and/or family member an opportunity to ventilate pent-up feelings which have been there for years. A flood of anger, hostility, resentment and hatred may come spewing forth with unabated force like an erupting geyser. This release valve is therapeutic for the person and any attempt to contain it is re-pressurizing those feelings.

Acceptance implies looking at and dealing with the alcoholic as a person rather than as a problem. Personhood is often lost in the plethora of problematic episodes. Verdery notes that, "All too

¹⁰Ford, 63.

frequently we clergymen, like so many others in our society have sought to deal with symptoms and have lost sight of the man."¹¹ In essence this means looking at the alcoholic as a non-entity, in an I-It rather than an I-Thou relationship to utilize Buber's terminology. A desire to be accepted as a person is basic without incurring the condemnation of the pastor.

As ministers we often miss helping the alcoholic because we do not recognize he wants our help and needs it but is trying to find some way to tell us about it without being rejected or condemned.¹²

The alcoholic may be his/her own worst enemy at this point. Acceptance is desperately desired, but rejection is often invited by his/her words or actions to substantiate the image of being unacceptable. The informed pastor is aware of this circular self-defeating cycle and can be alert to deal with it constructively. As the alcoholic senses acceptance, the path is paved for a meaningful pastoral relationship and involvement in the recovery process.

2. Communicating a Sense of Empathy

Once the pastor has established a sense of acceptance, his/her next task is to establish a sense of empathy or understanding. Establishing a sense of rapport is important so as not to evoke the feelings of attack and paranoia which are already running rampant in the person.

Empathy is defined as "Imaginative projection of one's own

¹¹Verdery, 272.

¹²Thomas J. Shipp, Helping the Alcoholic and His Family (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966) 48.

consciousness into another being."¹³ This gives the person a sense that the pastor is really with him/her in the struggle. It involves entering into that person's life and attempting to think with, feel with and be with him/her. As acceptance is the foundation stone for the pastor involving himself/herself with the alcoholic and the transformation process, so empathy is the touchstone in this process.

Empathy must be distinguished from sympathy. Sympathy is what the alcoholic and his/her family member may be asking for in the pastoral relationship. The pastor can be easily seduced into feeling sorry for and siding with any and all people in the alcoholic system. This is not only an invitation to chaos and confusion, but also a way in which the pastor is drawn into the self-defeating cycle of dependency.

As empathy is established and understood as such, a level of trust is built which enables the pastor to be more effective. In many alcoholics the issue of trust versus mistrust in the Eriksonian schema of development is a fundamental issue. Clinebell traces this aspect of the problem to infancy. He sees it as having its genesis in the infant-mother relationship.¹⁴ The establishment of the trust relationship through empathy is a key to unlocking the door of the alcoholic's life in order to deal with the egocentricity and narcissism which has governed his/her life to that point. Cracking the defenses aids in setting the transformation process in motion.

¹³Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary, 2nd ed. (Springfield: G. & C. Merriam, 1956) 269.

¹⁴Howard J. Clinebell, Jr., "Response to Tiebout," Pastoral Psychology 13:123 (1962) 59.

In the process the alcoholic likewise learns to be empathetic in relationship to others as s/he sees that modeled in the pastor.

Stewart contends that developing empathy within the alcoholic is essential for recovery. He writes,

The nature of addiction, therefore, is such that the practice of empathy is essential in recovery and to life-long sobriety, not just in order to be kind and to help the other fellow, but also to fulfill oneself by a method other than intoxication.¹⁵

Empathy contributes to personal growth so that the power struggle for control and manipulation can be surrendered.¹⁶

As the pastor seeks to involve himself/herself in the transformation process, empathy becomes an important factor in the initial phase of the work with the alcoholic and his/her family.

3. Communicating a Sense of Worth and Love

Another prerequisite as a pastor in working with alcoholics and their families is the ability to communicate a sense of worth and love. Feelings of worthlessness are expressed in the forms of remorse, regret, shame and embarrassment or the sense of worthlessness may be covered up by the thin veneer and veil of arrogance and grandiosity. The pastor who wishes to work effectively must be convinced himself/herself that the alcoholic and the family are not only worth saving, but can be saved. Ford states specifically in relationship to the alcoholic that love is the primary pastoral dynamic.

¹⁵Stewart, 45.

¹⁶Stewart, 47.

What can change him from a turner-away-from life to a turner-toward-life? Only love can, only love for him as an individual human being can and he will not be fooled by anything that falls short of being completely genuine.¹⁷

Authenticity and honesty become the expressions of love. For the pastor it means that this kind of love needs to be modeled in the pastor's life by refraining from allowing the person to establish a dependency relationship.¹⁸ Authentic pastoral care demonstrates a love which encourages responsibility and accountability lest it slip into the snare of fostering irresponsibility and perpetuating the addictive cycle. The pastor needs to *communicate* the reality of love for the person without condoning the person's behavior.

This means engaging in 'tough love' as it was discussed earlier in this paper. The pastor's proclivity for nurturing people in distress makes the concept and implementation of tough love very difficult. Lack of confrontation for the alcoholic and his/her family serves only to perpetuate the problem.

Theologically, the pastor can be premature with the message of the Gospel and out of genuine love may need to address the situation in the context of the law. Keller writes,

So often we hear that we (as pastors) are to be nonjudgmental, and we lose sight of the fact that the word judgmental has two meanings. There is a judgmental attitude that is moralistic and rejecting, but there is also a judgmental attitude that is non-moralistic and non-rejecting....The non-moralistic, non-rejecting judgmental attitude has the elements of understanding and acceptance and moves in the direction of helping a person to greater self-awareness and greater honesty about himself and his

¹⁷Ford, 49.

¹⁸Ford, 53.

condition, and his responsibility. It is basic in the process of confrontation.¹⁹

In terms of the pastoral care approach at this juncture, Clinebell notes that this kind of an approach was characteristic of pastoral care prior to the modern era. He credits Tiebout with lifting up this aspect of the recovery process and the implications it may have for pastoral care.²⁰

Love takes on a sacrificial character in that it is willing to risk rejection and hostility in order that a break through of the defenses might occur and the transformation process begin. In relationship to the alcoholic this means staying close to his/her ego and concentrating on the drinking itself. Shifting the attention and focus away from the drinking is a universal technique employed by the alcoholic to protect himself/herself. The shift may be to the family or a particular member of the family, the job, the inequities of the world or the ineptness of the pastor. It requires a great deal of love to firmly bring the person back to dealing with the issue at hand. Persistent concentration on the drinking works according to Keller who writes,

This process works because we know that alcoholics are bothered and bewildered by their drinking. In most cases, such kind of communication is possible even with the openly hostile alcoholic, who certainly does not intend to talk about his drinking.²¹

As frightening and painful as this may be for the pastor, it is a necessary prerequisite if s/he is going to work effectively. It

¹⁹Keller, 77.

²⁰Clinebell, "Response to Tiebout," 59.

²¹Keller, 90.

involves a deeper and broader understanding of the word love for the alcoholic.

This same kind of gentle, but firmly confrontive style of love, is also imperative in working more specifically with members of the family. More often than not, the pastoral encounter with the problem of alcoholism will come from a member of the alcoholic's family. Even before the approach of the family member, there are signs and signals that something may be amiss and the loving sensitivity of the pastor can be critical in aiding the person to deal with the issue before it reaches crisis proportions. Shipp writes,

If the minister is on his toes, he will have an opportunity to detect alcoholism in its early stages. The family often turns first to the minister for help, and because of guilt and shame the church may be the first activity they drop, and the fellowship from which they withdraw.²²

This is not to suggest that every family which withdraws from the fellowship of the church is having difficulty with alcoholism, but it can be part of a total barometric reading and present an occasion for the pastor to make a pastoral call. The pastoral call places the pastor in one of the most strategic positions for initiating work with the alcoholic and family.

The minister's role gives him two advantages over most other professionals in helping to bring such release. He is in touch with the entire family unit and he is expected to visit without a special invitation.²³

The pastor communicates love to the family by being available to

²²Shipp, 121.

²³Howard J. Clinebell, Jr., "Pastoral Care of the Alcoholic's Family Before Sobriety," Pastoral Psychology 13:123 (1962) 19.

listen to their saga and story. Clinebell states that this is effective in establishing rapport, experiencing relief, gaining a new perspective and giving the pastor some picture of what is happening in the home.²⁴

Love can initially be communicated to the family by freeing them from the paralyzing sense of responsibility for the alcoholic's drinking. Whereas it is important in dealing with the alcoholic to focus on the drinking, for the family member it is important to focus away from the drinking. Family members often become obsessively fixated on the drinking and utilize measures which are as bizarre as they are futile to make the person stop. By concentrating on the family member's frustration over the lack of control and responsibility for the drinking, a tremendous burden can be lifted.

One of the most effective ways of aiding that process is to encourage the person, preferably the whole family, to attend Al-Anon. Until such time that the family member(s) come to terms with his/her own feelings, attitudes and disposition; it is virtually impossible to break the self-defeating cycle of behavior. The pastor can be instrumental in taking the person himself/herself or making arrangements for the same. Exposure to this supportive and understanding community is a powerful asset in the initial phases of recovery.

Thus by communicating acceptance, empathy and love; the pastor has made the initial inroads into the family system. This sets the stage for continued efforts at intervention and facilitating the transformation process.

²⁴Clinebell, "Pastoral Care," 22.

D. THE PASTORAL ROLE IN INTERVENTION

The informed and involved pastor plays a multiplicity of significant roles in dealing systemically with the alcoholic and his/her family. Lack of information and clarity has precluded much pastoral participation in the past. The pastor can be a pivotal person in the process and consideration will be given to five major functions as a focus for attention.

1. Catalyst

Persons caught in the addictive cycle suffer from a paralyzing immobility. The helpless and hopeless syndrome is operative and an outside catalytic agent can facilitate movement if that person has knowledge of the family system, the dynamics of the disease and an understanding of the transformation process. The pastor occupies such a strategic position. The pastor as catalyst must be prepared to deal with the dynamics of this function.

In the first place s/he must be willing to risk. There is the risk of rejection by the alcoholic and/or family. The pastor may be seen as one whose attempt at intervention is interpreted as interference. The denial may be so strong in the system that the pastor experiences personal and professional rejection. The issue at stake is often the pastor's professional identity and ego integrity in his/her willingness to take the kind of risk which is necessary to facilitate significant movement and action on the part of some person

in the system.

If outright rejection is not experienced, strong resistance despite the agony and anguish of the situation, is often encountered. If the pastor is not prepared for this s/he can easily become frustrated and sense that the effort is futile. Persistence and patience coupled with faith and fortitude are necessary. The pastor understands as Blane notes, that resistance is caused by fear on the part of the alcoholic, there is

...trepidation about direct and steady scrutiny of his inner self. This is called resistance. The caretaker (pastor) must be prepared to be seduced, misled, rebuffed, challenged, and thwarted by his client.²⁵

The person, whether the alcoholic or family member, may comply with the pastoral counseling for a period and then withdraw. Resistance may be encountered by the person intellectualizing about the situation, attempting to dehumanize or depersonalize the pastor or sexualize the relationship in order to stave off dealing with the problem. Fundamental to the resistance is a fear of trusting. Since the alcoholic is incapable of such trust it must be engendered by the pastor as s/he works with the person. If the pastor is not put off by the alcoholic's maneuvering, the pastor's persistence at accepting the alcoholic can prevail. This signals a shift in the alcoholic's view of others as well as himself/herself.²⁶ Clinebell integrates this issue of basic trust in the Eriksonian psychological sense with the theological understanding of God.

²⁵Howard T. Blane, The Personality of the Alcoholic (New York: Harper & Row, 1968) 99.

²⁶Blane, 100.

Basic trust is the foundation of the ability to trust God. The person who is psychologically damaged at the infantile level is also spiritually damaged.²⁷

Lack of trust which forms the core of resistance is overcome by the pastor in the form of accepting love for the person. At this point the pastor is incarnationally present with love as a symbol and embodiment of the love of God for that person in his/her situation. Even though many of these people, whether the alcoholics or family members have heard from the time they were little about God's love, they have not appropriated it personally in their lives. Theologically their resistance has precluded the experience of grace. The love of God has been a verbal abstraction, not an experienced reality. The basic human problem of anxiety occasioned by estrangement from God has not been solved.²⁸ The pastor must be prepared to also practice 'tough love' with the alcoholic and family. For the pastor this means a love which is willing to be confrontive without being moralistic or judgmental. Realizing the risks and recognizing the resistance results in expressing love in the most appropriate manner for the alcoholic and his/her family.

In addition to running a risk and recognizing resistance in the pastor's role as catalyst, s/he needs to also avoid the role of rescuer.

The caring and nurturing dimension of pastoral ministry can be hazardous in working with alcoholics and families if the pastor sees his/her role as rescuer rather than catalyst for change. The posture of the rescuer may carry with it an implicit attitude of hostility as

²⁷Clinebell, "Response to Tiebout," 60.

²⁸Keller, 10.

noted by Blum and Blum in their research.

One must also be cautious about the intentions of those change-agents who make a strong display of 'helping.' The patient who flees them may be quite astute in sensing something other than the milk of human kindness behind those loving protestations. 'God save me from those people who keep telling me they want to help me,' as one patient put it - and he may have been quite right. Price (1958) in her study confirms this feeling. Price analyzed the reaction of over-protectiveness in social workers and discovered that it was born not so much out of love and generosity but stemmed instead from their hostility to patients with social problems, particularly those who created difficulties in the environment. Over-protectiveness towards such patients served to cover up the feelings of annoyance and hostility.²⁹

The rescuing role may likewise be prompted by an unexpressed fear which the pastor has of the alcoholic. S/he may be afraid of his/her behavior or the consequences of involvement with this person. The pastor in the rescue role rather than the catalyst role can easily become an unwitting accessory to the perpetuation of the alcoholism. The pastor who becomes a rescuer of the alcoholic also runs the risk of finding himself/herself in an adversarial relationship with the rest of the family.

If the pastor is to be an effective catalyst, s/he must detach himself/herself from the situation in order to be objective and thus a precipitator of change rather than a perpetuator of the cycle. Blane notes that it is a rare quality to find such a person who can both establish limits and tolerate resistance while at the same time remaining empathetic.³⁰

As a catalyst the pastor is the facilitator and can be the prime

²⁹Eva Maria and Richard H. Blum, Alcoholism (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1967) 213.

³⁰Blane, 132.

mover in intervention if s/he recognizes the risks, the resistance and the readiness to rescue. Rejection and failure are experienced as frequently, if not more so, than acceptance and success. A theology of ministry informed by a theology of the cross accepts the risks and realities of the situation and assumes the role of catalyst.

2. Correlator

A second function which the pastor as a spiritual leader can perform is that of a correlator. In the Tillichean sense, the pastor correlates the understanding of the human experience with the resources of faith in the transformation process. Pastors function not only as therapists, but also as theologians for the people with whom they come in contact. Parishoners in particular have often asked, "What connection is there between what is happening in my life with the message of the Christian faith?" The pastor is again in a strategic position to interpret the experience of life and translate it into the language of faith. Therapeutically the pastor recognizes the psycho-social dynamics of the disease, theologically the pastor aids in naming those dynamics with faith language and thus correlates faith and life.

It is the contention of this paper that Harry Tiebout has provided pastors with a paradigm theory which finds expression in a social paradigm of recovery in A.A. and Al-Anon. The pastor adds to this the theological perspective, synthesizes the varying contributions and aids in correlating this for the alcoholic and his/her family.

The basic key to the process is the psycho-spiritual phenomenon

of surrender. Tiebout named this process conversion and acknowledged its spiritual dimension. The conversion experience needs to be recognized as valid and integral to the process of transformation.³¹ Clinebell observes that Tiebout functioned prophetically for pastors in finding the key to the transformation process.

It is noteworthy that a psychiatrist now confronts us with certain experiences which are intimately related to such themes as conversion and rebirth - themes which are deeply rooted in our religious tradition.³²

The pastor thus brings an added dimension as a correlator or theological interpreter and translator of human experience. For the people who are members of the church, mystified by the phenomenon of alcoholism in their lives; faith language can be a most crucial factor in the intervention process as they hear familiar categories of faith related to their experience.

The psycho-social-spiritual interactionist perspective sees a strong correlation between the centrality of surrender and basic Christian anthropology. The concept of 'sin' for example takes on relevant existential meaning as noted by Keller,

When surrender takes place, it is more than surrender to the reality of powerlessness over alcohol. Dr. Harry Tiebout states that 'at the start of life the psyche: (1) assumes its own omnipotence, (2) cannot accept frustrations, (3) functions at a tempo allegretto with a good deal of staccato and vivace thrown in.' Remembering what has already been said about our 'being by nature sinful' we see that what Dr. Tiebout says exists 'at the start of life' is quite identical to the theological doctrine of original sin.³³

³¹Verdery, 281.

³²Clinebell, "Response to Tiebout," 58.

³³Keller, 43.

The pastor can also serve as translator and correlator in depicting the connection between surrender and faith. This perspective has a three dimensional level. The first is interpreting for the alcoholic the understanding of faith as an implicit trust in God a surrendering of oneself and one's problems to God who promises blessing to the one who is willing to admit defeat and so gain victory.

The second level of interpretation is for the spouse and/or family members to also practice faith as trust in the sense of 'releasing' the one drinking to the care of God and 'relinquishing' the God-like posture which they have assumed in relationship to the alcoholic. Clinebell sees this as the most salutary thing a pastor can aid the family in doing.³⁴ It is noteworthy that when one member in the family gets well, it has a profound effect on others as well. In the spouse's release and surrender of the alcoholic, the alcoholic's surrender process may also be facilitated.

This release is more than just a psychological phenomenon. From the perspective of theology it is the 'leap of faith' as Kierkegaard would express it. An ultimate faith or trust in the promise of God brings an outward release of the one who is drinking and an inward release from the assumed responsibility for that person's drinking.

Release can also be interpreted theologically as a way of respecting the unique personhood of people. Verdery writes,

Consciously or unconsciously, each seems to use his own unique method to master the other person. Not until each relinquishes this need to control and allows the other the privilege inherent in his own personality can there be true, meaningful sobriety. Lying at the heart of the Judeo-Christian religion, this doctrine of respect

³⁴Clinebell, "Pastoral Care," 26.

for others needs to be translated into everyday living by the example of the minister and experienced by those close to him.³⁵

This lifts up the third level of surrender or release as faith in this process and that is the ability of the pastor himself/herself to practice and model faith in relationship to the alcoholic and his/her family. The pastor becomes discouraged, disheartened, despairing and despondent when those in the alcoholic family do not respond. It is imperative for the pastor to be able to 'release' these people in faith to the care of God and be cognizant of one's own limitations. Once the immediate crisis is past, the family often returns to its former patterns of living. The pastoral approach may have planted the seed which later may sprout and issue in growth and healing at a later date. The temporary alleviation of pain is usually just that and suffices until the next crisis erupts.

The question for the pastor is whether s/he has faith in God and in the process. Can the pastor in the midst of this sometimes slow moving process demonstrate faith by patient expectation when sufficient chronological time has passed and the chaitotic moment arrives? Even as forgiveness and justification theologically imply that one accepts that one is accepted, so pastoral patience involves a faith which accepts that the alcoholic and/or family is non-accepting of that acceptance with the reality and framework of human freedom. Clinebell's counsel for the pastor at this juncture is most noteworthy when confronted with failure,

³⁵E.A. Verdery, "Pastoral Care of the Alcoholic's Family after Sobriety," Pastoral Psychology 13:123 (1962) 35.

In working with alcoholics and their families, the Serenity Prayer of A.A. is good medicine for the pastor. There are many things about the alcoholic family which he cannot hope to change.³⁶

A recitation of the Serenity Prayer is a statement of faith and the pastor may need to function as the exegete of faith not only for the alcoholic and family, but for the pastor himself/herself.

The pastor also serves as correlator in giving theological interpretation and integrity to the reality of suffering. Suffering and pain elicit negative images. Suffering may be interpreted theologically as punishment from God or as a signal of divine disfavor. For the alcoholic and family, suffering can also be salutary. Suffering may be the vehicle whereby the gift of surrender can be given. Keller notes that,

Such surrender is one of the great hidden potential blessings of suffering. Fortunate is the person whose problems get him into trouble and anguish serious enough to bring him to surrender, and from which he turns to God in faith and commitment to learn that the Father is waiting with mercy and strength sufficient.³⁷

It is unfortunate for the alcoholic and/or family that such needless suffering may have to occur before the surrender and transformation process is set in motion,

But with the deep surrender process the door is opened to God, usually through others, to perform the wonder of his grace, in the life of a person who is ready to function as a responsible human being.³⁸

The pastor correlates the biblical truth of the baptized lifestyle with the surrender motif. Discipleship from the Christian perspective involves total commitment and total surrender.

³⁶Clinebell, "Pastoral Care," 29.

³⁷Keller, 43.

³⁸Keller, 43.

Christ has said that a man must lose his life to find it. If a man wants to hang on to the infantile qualities described by Tiebout, he will lose his life. If he is willing to let go of these qualities, he will find life. Not until this takes place in the whole man, conscious and unconscious, is there surrender.³⁹

The fighting and the resistance stops and the humble acknowledgement of defeat and the necessity for surrender are accepted. As noted in the chapter on the Lutheran understanding of anthropology as it relates to baptism, there is both discontinuity in terms of the new life, but also continuity in the sense of the persistence of the old nature.

However, Tiebout clearly points out, as does Christian doctrine, that the Ego never assumes that it should be stopped and should die, or that this can happen. On any given day it is a powerful enemy that can take control. This points up the significance of the 24-hour program in A.A. The alcoholic needs to begin each day in surrender.⁴⁰

The new and resurrected life is therefore not a life free from problems and cares, but is a life from the Christian perspective wherein the person is baptized into the death of Christ and is thereby transformed not into glory, but the way of the cross. The reality of the baptized lifestyle with its concomitant implications reemphasizes the prominence of faith and the preeminence of grace.

Correlating the experience of the alcoholic and his/her family with the theological doctrine of grace becomes the pastor's most important work in his/her function as a spiritual interpreter and translator. By word and deed, it is important to see 'surrender' within the context of grace and Gospel rather than despair and law.

Theologically surrender is not 'giving up,' but 'giving in' as has been

³⁹Keller, 50.

⁴⁰Keller, 52.

previously expressed. It is a giving in to a power which is greater than self and which can miraculously transform life - this is the essence of grace. Keller in quoting from Tiebout notes,

'With respect to the act of surrender, let me emphasize the point - it is an unconscious event, not willed by the patient even if he should desire to do so.' Is not this observation by this psychiatrist strikingly parallel to what the Scriptures call grace?⁴¹

The radicality of grace comes to expression in the surrender and transformation process of recovery. The pastor translates this and interprets that for those with whom s/he works. As the pastor both observes and experiences this in ministry, theology becomes fleshed out in human existence and can be so named.

The pastor functioning as the correlator provides a comprehensive and wholistic interpretation of the transformation process for the alcoholic and family.

3. Coordinator

In addition to catalyst and correlator, the pastor can also function strategically as coordinator in the ongoing transformation process. This aspect of the pastor's possible involvement is more functional in nature.

Coordinating needs to be distinguished from controlling. Neither the alcoholic nor the family needs someone else to attempt to control their lives or coerce them into doing something they do not choose to do. In most instances control and manipulation were the basic ingredients in both the family and extra-familial relationships.

⁴¹Keller, 52.

The pastor who functions as a coordinator aids in bringing some semblance of order to an otherwise chaotic situation.

A breakdown in communication in the family system is inevitable where there is alcoholism. Each person attempts to cope in his/her way with the processes which are operative. If significant change is to take place, there needs to be communication and a coordination of effort. The pastor is wise to meet with the entire family to coordinate their efforts in finding healing and wholeness.

The pastor can provide initially basic information concerning the disease of alcoholism so that his/her role may be that of educator. The facts concerning the dynamics of the disease are helpful for each person who is beginning to understand how s/he fits into the total picture. The pastor can provide an objective appraisal of what is happening as well as providing viable options and alternatives for people to exercise. As pastor s/he can aid in developing a spirit of cooperation rather than competition and cynicism as the process is set in motion. The pastor coordinates a reconnecting on the part of family members who have been alienated from each other as a result of the impact of alcoholism in the family system.

The pastor can also function as coordinator in being the liaison between the family and outside sources of help. Shipp expresses in succinct and accurate fashion the importance of the pastor and the pastor's attitude towards others who work with the alcoholic and family in the process of recovery and transformation.

We must make available the distinctive power of the clergyman and the church. We must not isolate ourselves from the community, feeling that if we have referred a person we have fulfilled our ministry to that person. Nor must we feel that our work is in

competition with other agencies, and certainly they are not in competition with the church or the ministry. We must work together to meet the needs and minister to the alcoholic.⁴²

The pastor does not insist on being the coordinator, but s/he is in a very strategic position to do exactly that knowing the alcoholic, the family as well as the available resources in the community who deal with alcoholism.

Dr. Vernelle Fox pioneered the interdisciplinary approach to treatment in the Georgian Clinic. Her monograph entitled, "The Best Prime Therapist for an Alcoholic is an Interdisciplinary Approach"⁴³ still stands as a monumental methodological innovation in the treatment of alcoholism. With this approach the pastor can coordinate efforts for intervention and getting the person to treatment and likewise can be involved in the treatment process itself. The pastoral function is more than logistical in coordinating the efforts, s/he can participate in the treatment program and become an integral part of the whole process. From personal experience this often meant accompanying family members to the treatment center, introducing family to the staff, participating in staffing sessions as well as taking part in some of the treatment center activities.

Subsequent to the work by Fox, others have seen the value of an interdisciplinary approach to change. Blum and Blum note that,

One task of treatment programs is not to exclude potential

⁴²Shipp, 51.

⁴³Vernelle Fox, M.D., "The Best Prime Therapist for an Alcoholic is an Interdisciplinary Approach," Paper Presented at Second World Congress of International Rehabilitation Medicine Association, November, 1974.

change-agents but to discover who can be of greatest value to which type of patient at what point in his therapy career.⁴⁴

Supporting evidence for a holistic approach comes from Ruth Fox who writes,

In treating any individual suffering from any illness one must see him as a whole person, a living body with myriad physical changes going on simultaneously, as well as a person who thinks, feels, suffers, hopes and despairs. The illness of alcoholism is so global in its effects on the individual, the family and society that it will take the combined efforts of many disciplines to understand it, treat it, and eventually prevent it.⁴⁵

Vernon Johnson adds a supportive voice from his perspective on the same issue,

Therapy for the alcoholic must treat the whole man. He suffers emotionally, mentally, physically, and spiritually. Our program came to be designed with this whole spectrum in mind. Our interdisciplinary team includes physicians, clergymen, psychologists, sociologists, pathologists and psychiatrists, as well as the regular personnel of a hospital setting. This means that nurses, administrative people, orderlies, janitors, everybody is involved. In the hospitals that use this system, everyone is part of the treatment team.⁴⁶

Theologically the pastor can justify his/her approach as coordinator based on the premise that God is indeed active in the whole of the world to bring health and healing through various channels and agencies whether the name of God is used or not.

As noted previously, the coordinating function of the pastor extends to working with self-help groups such as A.A. and Al-Anon. Information concerning the location, time and frequency of meetings can

⁴⁴Blum and Blum, 23.

⁴⁵Ruth Fox, "Conclusions and Outlook," in Ruth Fox and Peter Lyon (eds.) Alcoholism (New York: Random House, 1955) 329.

⁴⁶Vernon Johnson, I'll Quit Tomorrow (New York: Harper & Row, 1973) 60.

be coordinated by the pastor for people who are in need of these supportive services.

The pastor coordinates efforts not only in the family, with other helping professionals and agencies, but also within the congregation as well. Education of the people of God in relationship to alcoholism, those afflicted and affected is an important part of the pastor's educational ministry. From the perspective of this paper the task of the pastor in coordinating efforts at translating, interpreting and directing loom large in his/her ministry to raise the consciousness of all of the people in the parish. Even as the difficulty arose out of a social situation, so its treatment and continuing support must come from a social network.

The work which the pastor does in coordinating efforts at various levels can be viewed theologically as part of the pastor's task as a shepherd as well as accentuating the reality of the transformation process as God's work in the world through agencies and efforts outside of the formal ecclesiastical structure.

4. Confessor

A fourth function which the pastor can fulfill in the transformation process is that of confessor. Perhaps this is best exemplified in being available for listening to members of the family and/or community as well as the alcoholic himself/herself. The need to unburden the guilt and the shame which accompanies alcoholism is a critical need for all members of the family. Often they withdraw and isolate themselves thereby carrying an intolerable burden within

themselves. A finely tuned ear is necessary to hear the discordant and dissonant life experiences which need to be shared or confessed.

One way of being a confessor as pastor is to be involved in the Fifth Step work alluded to earlier in this paper. The Big Book suggests that a clergy person be used for this confessional dimension of the process.⁴⁷ In some Christian denominations such as Roman Catholicism, this aspect of spiritual discipline is incorporated in the confessional ritual and governed by those rubrics. Protestant denominations in recent decades have changed the nomenclature from its traditional ecclesiastical designation as 'confession' and use the word 'counseling' as borrowed from the social sciences. Perhaps the theological terminology needs to be reaffirmed to distinguish the specific spiritual dimension of the process. The purpose is the granting of release from the guilt and shame incurred.

The pastor, hopefully, will look upon the 5th Step as a real pastoral 'soul care' relationship for which he must and can find time on his busy schedule whether or not the alcoholic is a member of his congregation. Naturally, as he has more experience with 5th Steps, he will become more skilled in determining what is a good inventory.⁴⁸

This is an opportunity for the alcoholic and/or family member to admit or confess the exact nature of their wrong doing and the manner in which this has affected them and those around them. It is to be more than an objective description, rather an opening up of the windows of one's total life to allow the stench of the foul past to be eliminated and to allow the fresh air of new life to enter. This is

⁴⁷Alcoholics Anonymous (New York: Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, 1955) 74.

⁴⁸Keller, 122.

often an excruciatingly painful process. Those who approach it as though it were just another conversation likely have not really understood its purpose or taken the depth of its impact seriously. Keller describes briefly what is included in the Fifth Step for the alcoholic.

His drinking history and overt behavior usually will be included. However, the important thing is to determine the nature of his defects and realize 'this is me.' There should be a listing of at least two or three specific examples of each one. He should also seek to determine his assets, but these he may be able to see more clearly as he continues on the road to recovery.⁴⁹

This is not the time nor the place for the pastor to be nurturing in the sense of minimizing the pain and the trauma. One can be supportive in accepting the person in an unqualified fashion so as to allow the outpouring of the spirit in confession. Keller suggests that,

Throughout the Fifth Step the alcoholic must be allowed to feel what pain there is for him in this experience. The pastor should neither minimize the gravity of anything he relates nor try to comfort him with reassurance. He wouldn't be seeing the pastor if he weren't willing to face the truth about himself.⁵⁰

Thus the process has a two-fold purpose. The first is a confession of one's faults and admission of defects of character which aids in deflating the Big Ego as Tiebout termed it which needs to be crushed lest it destroy the person. The person is not left at the point of complete groveling as though s/he were less than a person, but is also encouraged to share with the confessor his/her sense of strengths which can be judiciously used as gifts given by God for

⁴⁹Keller, 123.

⁵⁰Keller, 125.

service. Big Ego deflation results in self-esteem and self-respect as the healthy ego gains a perspective on who the person truly is before God.

For the pastor, serving as the confessor, it is also a sacred moment of transformation. It is an experience which defies words as one watches the miracle of transformation happen before your very eyes. It is one of those sacred moments when silence, a carefully listening ear and an appreciation of the dynamics of transformation serve one best in the pastoral role. It becomes a shared moment of mutuality when two people are gathered together and the presence of God is deeply felt.

The pastoral disposition and attitude is of prime importance. As the person experiences unqualified acceptance and attention, a deep bond is established and that person will return and share in confession again and again in the future. An incarnational theology serves one well once again for the pastor in his/her role as confessor.

5. Conciliator

A fifth role which the pastor can assume is that of conciliator as families begin the process of picking up and piecing together their lives as a unit. This aspect of pastoral work can be most arduous, difficult and time consuming. The reality of the situation is that often times the deterioration and dysfunction of the family system is at such a level that reconciliation is not a viable option. The conciliatory efforts of the pastor then need to be creatively directed toward accepting and appropriating that fact in the lives of those

involved. If reconciliation with others is not possible, reconciliation with God and with oneself always remains.

Many families, particularly if all are involved in the transformation process, choose to stay together and the task of conciliation becomes the primary focus of attention. The informed pastor can facilitate this process as confession can lead to conciliation, rebirth and renewal. Johnson underscores the difficulties involved in forgiveness and reconciliation.

Moreover, if he (injured party) is to be truly forgiving he will be forced to look at, recognize, and accept certain specific negative attitudes and postures within himself. And he must work out these problems if he is to regain spiritual and emotional balance in his own life. This is particularly difficult, since the injured party almost never feels any responsibility for the situation or for his own negative attitudes.⁵¹

The problem with reconciliation may therefore be lodged with members of the family who fail to admit their complicity and humanity in the process.

The pastor should not expect that the conciliatory process will occur overnight. The family system may be dealing with years of inappropriate behavior and ingrained dysfunctional patterns of relating. The transformation process can be very slow depending upon the depth of the pathology in the system and the readiness and willingness on the part of the family members to change. Repeated and renewed efforts at reconciliation may be necessary as the family works through layers of feelings and barriers.

⁵¹Johnson, 107.

Persistence and patience are prerequisites for such efforts. It is well to bear in mind that even when the family becomes more functional that difficulties and rifts will continue to occur simply because of the solidarity of the human condition. However, these problems need not be viewed as impossible or pointing towards the cycle reoccurring. Once the family has gained the tools for dealing with problems, they can more creatively and constructively iron out the differences.

A powerful component in the conciliatory process is the utilization of the Sacrament of the Eucharist. In the Lutheran tradition this Sacrament carries the strong message of reconciliation with God vertically and reconciliation with one's fellow human beings horizontally. Its efficacy is established theologically on the premise of grace, its context is the worshipping community and its prevailing atmosphere is that of joy as the words of forgiveness and reconciliation are pronounced and the dynamic reality experienced through mutual participation. Many families have utilized this as a liturgical process for sacramentally sealing the reality of reconciliation in their lives. Once again, the pastor is uniquely equipped for the role of conciliator as s/he participates fully in the transformation process which the alcoholic and his/her family comes to experience.

This chapter has addressed itself specifically to the pastoral role in the transformation process. The necessity of the pastor being aware of his/her attitudes, motivations and dispositions has been clearly established as a necessary prerequisite. Factual data,

training, dedication and a cooperative spirit in working with other disciplines is imperative if the health and well-being of the alcoholic and family are of paramount concern. The transforming power of God is seen in all which the pastor and others do in bringing about substantive change in individuals and families.

The pastor can play a strategic and unique role in this process if s/he takes seriously the five categories as delineated in this chapter. The pastor becomes an instrument of grace as s/he works firmly and effectively with the family system. There is more to the pastoral role than personal and professional preparation and becoming involved in intervention. It is to these dimensions of the ministry of transformation which the final chapter will address itself.

CHAPTER XII

THE PASTORAL ROLE IN THE ONGOING TRANSFORMATION PROCESS

A. INTRODUCTION

The last chapter focused on the pastoral preparation for transformation ministry to alcoholics and their families as well as involved participation in the intervention process. The pastor dare not view his/her role as completed once the transformation process is set in motion. There are at least three levels of involvement in the ongoing process of transformation ministry which this chapter will address.

The first is the continuing involvement with the family system, the second is the continuing involvement with the congregation and the third is the role and function of the pastor in relationship to his/her ministry of transformation as it relates to the wider community of the human family in the world.

These three levels of ministry point not only to the broad scope of ministry, but also to the processive nature of ministry in alcoholism. It is a task which likely will never be completed, but one in which the pastor learns to live one day at a time under grace functioning as an instrument of God in the transformation process.

B. ONGOING TRANSFORMATION MINISTRY WITH THE ALCOHOLIC AND FAMILY

1. Supportive Role

The pastor may assume that since things seem to be going reasonably

well that attention can be turned elsewhere. While the involvement is not as intense, a continuing relationship of immediate support and availability is imperative. The family may experience the trauma of a 'slip' or resumption of drinking. The dynamics of the slip have been previously discussed. What is now addressed is the pastoral care of the family during this episode should it occur. Pastoral support is critically necessary for both the alcoholic and the family and the pastor should not allow his/her personal and/or professional disappointment to get in the way. Blum and Blum advise,

What we would say, however, is that lapses from sobriety should not be made an excuse for rejecting the alcoholic. Lapses may be regarded and handled in the same way as other acting-out behavior (impulsive, self-destructive, or asocial behavior); namely, treatment should be geared to reduce the incidence of such behavior, and its severity in actual manifestations and consequences.¹

Other illnesses experience relapse, the same may be true for alcoholism. The person is responsible for what has happened and the incident may serve a useful purpose in underscoring the fact that s/he cannot drink in a controlled fashion. However, if the support group, including the pastor, find the slip intolerable this will have the effect of pulling out all support from the alcoholic. Ford notes, "For one unused to dealing with alcoholics these set-backs may be as catastrophic for the pastor-counselor as they are for the alcoholic."² The fact of the matter is that the alcoholic has let himself/herself down and not the family or the pastor.

Pastoral support is critical in the first weeks once the person

¹Eva Marie Blum and Richard H. Blum, Alcoholism (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1967) 243.

²Fred B. Ford, The Alcoholic (TS) (Newton Centre, MA: Andover Newton Department of Psychology, n.d.) 75.

has become sober for the alcoholic and family members find themselves under new kinds of pressure. Often there is the assumption that because the alcohol has been removed, all problems will dissipate. The alcoholic and family are still confronted with the problems of living and now the alcoholic does not have alcohol as a resource for coping and the family does not have the alcoholic for a scapegoat. Alcohol had served an important function. It is imperative for all to realize that "...until one understands alcohol as a solution one cannot understand it as a problem."³

The pressure is not only internal, but also external as family and social expectations begin to take their toll. The alcoholic and family hopefully have both A.A. and Al-Anon friends to whom they may turn for support and perhaps the outpatient services of a treatment center, but the pastor can also be an important resource who is readily available. The alcoholic and family need someone whom they can trust in these initial days of sobriety because the radical change process in lifestyle can be threatening. Other people cannot understand how fragile the situation is and expect the alcoholic and family to easily re-enter the mainstream of life. The family system needs someone to talk to about the problems and changes accompanying sobriety as everyone is tentative about his new lifestyle. The informed and involved pastor who knows the dynamics of recovery and transformation can be of critical support at this important time.

The transformation is processive and even with the renewal of

³E.A. Verdery, "Pastoral Care of the Alcoholic's Family After Sobriety," Pastoral Psychology 13:123 (1962) 31.

life which comes about with the discontinuance of drinking, there is still the continuance of humanity. McMillan writes,

We certainly need not expect to find a paragon of adjustment or virtue, for such perfectionism may itself be anathema to many alcoholics. We are likely to find instead a person who is growing, moving, depending. He will have his bad moments and days, but he also has a new resilience and a new capacity for self-forgiveness and self-assessment. He is a person who still has feet of clay but who, unlike many others, can now more readily admit it. He is a person who is quietly thankful for a life returned. He can see humor in life about him, and he can laugh at himself. Above all, he is sober today and grateful for that gift."⁴

Thus the alcoholic and the family are in need of the pastor's support and love in this radically new experience and lifestyle. The very novelty of the experience constitutes not only a thrill, but a threat to a family system which is not accustomed to assimilating rapid change. The supportive pastor plays an important role in the ongoing transformation process through the ministry of accessibility and presence.

2. Stimulus Role

In addition to being supportive, the pastor can assume the role of one who provides a stimulus for growth and encouraging a revised perspective on life. The self-help groups encourage the alcoholic and the family members to grow, but the pastor and congregation can also function in that capacity. Stewart writes that,

...freedom from addiction means much more than just recovery of a former state of health; it means also the experience of growth. In the whole person, growth is an action involving change of feeling and attitude towards oneself and others, an action amounting to a

⁴John J. McMillan, "Some Essentials in the Rehabilitation of the Addictive Personality," in Ruth Fox (ed.) Alcoholism (New York: Springer, 1967) 35.

way of life, a practical philosophy applied to one's behaviour from day to day."⁵

In this emerging new person s/he realizes that growth is not for the sake of others but for one's self. Again Stewart notes the importance of this disposition.

But we hope, as it continues, that each patient will come to regard sobriety as desirable primarily for himself, as a great gain in personal growth. The other reasons for sobriety will easily fall into place."⁶

As has been noted previously, this is a radical reversal of lifestyle and a new experience for the alcoholic and his/her family. Anxiety and fear are companions of new situations and providing positive stimulus for embracing this new perspective is of great help. The pastoral role of active listener and one who patiently guides is essential. It is imperative that the pastor be able to strike a happy medium between being too aggressive in pushing for change and thus frustrating the person and being too passive with the person and not providing adequate stimulus for change.

One way for the pastor to approach and deal with the anxiety is to affirm that the new lifestyle is an adventure into living rather than an anxious relinquishment of the familiar. Stewart believes that alcoholics are well suited to this new kind of adventure.

So there are three sound reasons why the alcoholic is well suited to adventure. His past drinking is evidence that he prized feeling, rather than result, experience rather than consequence. He sought the foreign, the strange, the new and the diverting in his distaste for the humdrum, the safe, and imitative nature of daily life. And

⁵David A. Stewart, Thirst for Freedom (Toronto: Musson, 1960) 48.

⁶Stewart, 305.

he sought to be in harmony with all around him, to identify with persons whom he would find threatening without the support of alcohol.

Contrary to those who believe that the alcoholic has to live a life completely at odds with his nature as a drinking person, I suggest that the alcoholic is well suited to a sober life, if he seeks sobriety as an adventure, not as the sure consequence of a treatment measure.⁷

The enthusiasm and energy which was once channeled into a destructive lifestyle can be redirected toward the future in hope and anticipation of a new and constructive style of life wherein growth, maturation, enjoyment of life in responsible living provides the image of an abundant life. The pastor in relationship with the alcoholic and family can be a stimulus for such a posture and attitude.

3. Sustaining Role

In addition to initial support and being a stimulus source, the pastor can also assume the role of sustainer in the ongoing life of the family. Verdery states it in this manner,

Pastoral concern needs to go deeper than that of helping an alcoholic gain sobriety, for sheer sobriety is an inadequate goal for the family as well as for the problem drinker. Beyond sobriety looms the ultimate goal of sober living.⁸

Sober living is another way of saying that sobriety must be coupled with serenity. Serenity or the peace which passes human understanding is found in the new healthy relationships which the alcoholic establishes first of all within the family, but which the family now likewise is capable of establishing with the alcoholic. Johnson writes,

⁷Stewart, 189.

⁸Verdery, 30.

At the same time the family will be seeking out and nurturing such attitudes as care, love, concern for others, faith, compassion, and gratitude. In families where recovery is successful, a truly new life may begin. Parents and children will find a new affection in their understanding and trust of each other, a new depth in their open communication with each other. This is the true goal of the whole process of treatment.⁹

The pastor as spiritual shepherd aids in sustaining such attitudes by his/her contact with the family and by being open and available as the alcoholic and family members continue in the transformation process.

It is a whole new perspective to be at ease and not at dis-ease with life, to be at peace and not in pieces when things do not go as planned. Disruption and disturbances of even the minutest kind used to set off drinking sprees. As the process of transformation takes hold in the person's life and is nurtured, s/he can and does experience peace even in the midst of life's storms. Whereas there was turbulence in the alcoholic's life when the world seemed calm, now there is calm in the alcoholic's life in spite of the world's turbulence. The pastor in his/her role as sustainer and enabler of new life can be a vital part of this new process. Even as the addictive process tended to perpetuate itself and become more deeply ingrained, so now the dynamic of transformation also perpetuates itself and deepens the relationships in the life of the alcoholic and his/her family. This is a new quality of life which is infectious by its very nature. It is this pull to a new life of freedom and sobriety with serenity which ultimately prevails. Stewart says,

⁹Vernon Johnson, I'll Quit Tomorrow (New York: Harper & Row, 1973) 110.

The drinking pattern, its analysis, the scientific suggestions for breaking it, the great service of Alcoholics Anonymous - all assume that love of abundant life is stronger than the half-dead, half-alive values of the sick alcoholic.¹⁰

There is a caution in all of this for the pastor. S/he plays an important role as sustainer or stabilizer in the shepherding role so that as pastor s/he does not get too far ahead of the recovering family system in the first flurry and flush of visible change and transformation. A proper balance between detachment and encouragement must be maintained in the pastoral role of sustainer. For example, too much encouragement may be interpreted as coercive, particularly if the pastor's own investment assumes too great a position. Keller warns,

...the important factor is for the pastor not to be out in front of the alcoholic in this area (coming back to church) so that his own needs rather than the alcoholic's are being met. The pastor's concern for this person must not change into an effort to manipulate him. Given a period of time, many alcoholics will come to a meaningful Christian faith and to meaningful existence with the Christian fellowship.¹¹

The role of sustainer is a long term role. It is particularly crucial with alcoholics and their families who have travelled the tough terrain of valleys and mountains in the struggle with alcoholism. The pastor provides a stabilizing and sustaining relationship in the long term transformation process as the valleys are lifted up, the mountains made low and the uneven and rough ground is made even and plain in the transformed lives of people.

There is more to pastoral ministry in alcoholism than the specific and narrow focus of working with alcoholics and their

¹⁰Stewart, 143.

¹¹Keller, 119.

families. Consideration is given to the congregational aspect of the pastoral ministry.

C. ONGOING TRANSFORMATION MINISTRY IN THE CONGREGATION

The ministry of transformation in relationship to the alcoholic and family in the congregation is one which deserves more attention than it has received in the past. The alcoholic family through the process of isolation has often cut off significant ties with the church and the decision to return is no easy matter. Congregational members likewise may be at a loss regarding their relationship to the alcoholic and family. They perhaps want to welcome them back, but feel awkward in doing so. They have questions with respect to what they should say or whether it is appropriate to talk about treatment and the family's prolonged absence. When the cloud of uncertainty and doubt caused by mutual anxiety descends over the congregation, everyone feels awkward and embarrassed and the alcoholic family may feel more alienated than ever.

1. Ministry of Reintegration

The pastor can play an important role in the reintegration process. The congregation can be a vital and viable network of healing ministry if the membership can be guided into seeing the nature of the situation and the importance of their response to the situation and the persons involved.

It is crucial as Woodruff points out that the congregation can suffer with the alcoholic, but not for him/her, neither can it become

sober for him/her. But it can be a redemptive community if it reaches out at the chaotic moment of surrender with acceptance and understanding. The alcoholic and family need this communal support, but may not be strong enough to ask for it, thus requiring the encouragement of congregational members.

The parish fellowship becomes the body of Christ when it expresses the spirit of unconditional forgiveness and grace towards the alcoholic. This becomes possible when the church recognizes that it is a human community, with all the imperfections that this implies. A redeeming community is always a confessing community.¹²

A strong ecclesiology is imperative. The nature of the church as the redemptive fellowship of believers is a primary truth which the pastor needs to communicate to the congregation. The church is not a conglomeration of 'do gooders' or 'pious pretenders,' but an aggregate of sinful people whose sinful nature is expressed in a variety of ways. The Gospel is both the proclamation and the implementation of grace for all so that each person can experience liberation and be what s/he essentially is, namely a redeemed child of God. The question of concern is whether this ideal ecclesiology is even close to reality in the life of a congregation. Keller poignantly states,

Although in the Christian fellowship there should be the openness to understand and the capacity to accept every person as he is, the fellowship is sometimes a hindrance rather than a help for man in the pain of his estrangement.¹³

The pastor has a monumental task before him/her to aid the congregation in becoming a community of acceptance for the alcoholic and family.

¹²C. Roy Woodruff, Alcoholism and Christian Experience (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1968) 117.

¹³Keller, 14.

2. Ministry of Intentionality

The pastor and congregation can with intentionality provide pastoral care for the alcoholic and family. The success story of Pastor Tom Shipp¹⁴ in this regard is no less than remarkable. His congregation functioned as an accepting host in not only reintegrating the alcoholic and family, but becoming intentional about it in its program of pastoral care. The involved and informed pastor can provide a kind of second eschalon group for alcoholics and their families in which they have occasion not only to share in their stories as they do in A.A. and Al-Anon, but have opportunity to discuss their situation in the light of the Christian faith. This kind of heterogeneous group could engage in theological reflection on their experience and present that as a gift to the church from their particular perspective. This aspect of pastoral work would be a way of the alcoholic and family giving to others and making an important contribution to the transformation ministry of the congregation. The innovative and creative pastor who guides people in this kind of ministry can effectively touch more people through this kind of group than would otherwise be possible. It could also provide a spiritual alternative for those who do not participate in A.A. or Al-Anon.

3. Ministry of Prevention

Another area in which the pastor's transformation ministry could

¹⁴Tom Shipp, The Trouble with Alcohol (Old Tappan, NJ: Revell, 1978)

be applied is in the area of prevention in his/her congregation. The decisive question is whether one can in effect engage in prevention when research has not at this juncture been able to provide a cause. The mystery still remains as to why some people become alcoholic while others do not. Determining etiology, whether singular or multiple causes, does not preclude efforts at prevention.

Professionals working in the field of alcoholism all suggest education as one possible preventative measure. The pastor can certainly implement educational programs in his/her congregation with regard to the nature of alcoholism as a disease, its symptoms, manifestations and consequences in the lives of people. Facts must be accurately and cogently presented so as to express reality. Discussion centered around the issues of alcohol usage by the community of faith may be another preventative educational endeavor. If the church is to become a community of moral inquiry as suggested by Don Browning¹⁵ and James Gustafson,¹⁶ then opportunity for such candid discussion and sharing of thoughts must be available. The use and abuse of alcohol has moral and ethical implications as Clinebell notes in his book.¹⁷ These difficult issues cannot go unaddressed.

Likewise the pastor can be involved in the wider scope and context of prevention by facilitating discussion of the social, ethnic

¹⁵Don Browning, The Moral Context of Pastoral Care (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1976)

¹⁶James Gustafson, The Church as Moral Decision Maker (Philadelphia: Pilgrim Press, 1970).

¹⁷Howard J. Clinebell, Jr., Understanding and Counseling the Alcoholic (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1968) 167-168.

and cultural mindset of the day in relationship to alcohol and alcoholism. Understanding and sharing these views and feelings may bring not only information but insight and aid people in making more responsible decisions about their own drinking.

It has been contended that alcoholism is not only a physical disease with a compulsive psychological component, but is also a spiritual disease. Perhaps the preventative work from the pastoral perspective lies principally in this area. The void, vacuum or 'hole in the gut' as articulated by alcoholics prompts the questing or thirsting after fulfillment. Theologically that hunger and thirst can never be totally satisfied by the perishable commodities of food and drink which are ingested into the body. Satisfaction comes alone from the Bread of Life and the Living Water to use Johannine metaphors. Ultimate meaning for life is a gift which is given not as a goal which is achieved. The message of the Gospel itself as 'good news' which satisfies the deepest longing of human beings is foundational to the pastoral proclamation and informs pastoral procedure in working with people.

This process begins at the earliest level of human existence. The pastor would be well advised to work with young parents in communicating to them the importance of their task in providing an atmosphere in which 'basic trust' is experience from infancy onward. Provision is made for not only understanding the psychological and sociological implications of this critical time in human development, but also incorporating the theological dimension of trust as faith. The research noted earlier in this paper which links one component

factor of alcoholism with the inability to trust and the immobility in moving from basic narcissism to social sensitivity to others provides a strong case for pastors working with parents to aid in laying a solid foundation for life.

The importance of meaningful relationships within the congregation is another significant dimension of existence. Isolation and estrangement have been noted as primary conditions in alcoholics and their families.

The informed and imaginative pastor can be instrumental in shaping the congregation as a social-theological matrix of support. Sharing joys and sorrows, bearing one another's burdens and incarnationally expressing the love of God by loving one's neighbor lessens the need to create a relationship with a substance rather than with people. The pastor as shepherd can equip the people of God for this kind of ministry of feeding, caring and nurturing healthy interdependent relationships in the context of the church as the community of faith.

D. THE PASTORAL ROLE IN THE WIDER PERSPECTIVE OF MINISTRY IN ALCOHOLISM

Historically the church has sought to minister to the alcoholic and to address the problem of alcoholism in society. Conley and Sorenson have taken a historical survey of the church's involvement with alcoholism in the United States. The book portrays the fact that the church has always been concerned and involved, but perhaps not always in the most judicious manner or in the most helpful way. Nonetheless, they affirm that,

For most American alcoholics and their families the local clergyman is the first professional who is asked for help. Over the last two hundred years the church has developed a closer association with the alcoholic than with almost any other ill or troubled person.¹⁸

Competent counselors are available for alcoholics and their families in addition to pastors who can work effectively in the treatment process. The pastor's ministry to the church and the world in relationship to alcoholism is to be a theological resource for addressing the issues and the concerns which often emerge. This wider dimension of ministry takes on a two-dimensional character. The first is the prophetic role and the second is the hermeneutical role.

1. The Prophetic Role in Transformation Ministry

As critical as working with individuals, families and the congregation is, from the broad perspective of pastoral care, so is the wider context of society and culture. One could say that the world itself is the ultimate milieu of psycho-social-theological concern. From the interactionist perspective, the impact of faith finds its greatest challenge in confronting the conditions and systems which dehumanize and demoralize human beings. The pastor's role is prophetic at this level of involvement. Systemic transformation occurs more slowly than familial or individual transformation processes. Significant societal change requires political and economic strategies of involvement. The fight against alcoholism from a prophetic perspective of necessity includes the transformation of social

¹⁸Paul C. Conley and Andrew A. Sorensen, The Staggering Steeple (Philadelphia: Pilgrim Press, 1971) 5.

attitudes as well as the transformation of political and economic structures which create the matrix for the genesis and perpetuation of alcoholism.

The pastor is well advised in this prophetic role not to attempt to assume the transformation of social attitudes and practices alone. The support of the congregation, other clergy and churches as well as the community itself is imperative. The prophetic role is fraught with frustration and disillusionment, but the function is critical nonetheless. The biblical and theological posture of the prophet is that of being faithful and not always necessarily successful in mission. Alcoholism is but one disease and one expression of the total spectrum of human maladies brought about by the wider context of larger oppressive and destructive systems. The prevention of alcoholism is significantly linked with the transformation of the social system.

Theologically this does not mean that the Kingdom of God is ushered in by human effort, achievement and accomplishment. A utopian society devoid of difficulties, including alcoholism, is not within the purview of the human race given the reality of the human condition. However, this reality and theological truth does not exclude or preclude the church and its pastors and people from responsibility for an involvement in the world. The image and metaphor of the leaven is appropriate in bringing about transformation and renewal.

The pastor is often a person who has a high degree of visibility outside the context of his/her congregation. In addition to assuming a prophetic role in relationship to the issue of the alcoholic and alcoholism, s/he can also engage in the hermeneutical task of theologically interpreting the dynamics of the disease and recover to people outside of the congregational setting. A significant service

can be made in ministry by being a spokesperson and interpreter to others. Critical areas for pastoral interpretation will be given consideration at this point.

2. The Hermeneutical Role in Transformation Ministry

The dominical injunction to be the 'salt of the earth' and the 'light of the world' often are metaphors which are never translated into reality. The church's fascination with organization and structure often precludes its most important work of interpreting the Gospel to the world in word and in deed. The pastor can equip the people of God for ministry (Ephesians 4:11-16) so that together they can proclaim and enact all facets of ministry. The specific focus is the hermeneutical task of interpreting the dynamics of transformation in the recovery from alcoholism.

This process begins by reaffirming the doctrine of the universal priesthood of all believers. Each member of the congregation is a minister and carries out a vital ministry in his/her life in the world. As the community of faith becomes informed about the nature of alcoholism and the disease concept as it affects the whole family system, members of the congregation can deal more adequately and constructively on the job and in society with those who are afflicted and affected. A ministry of concern and involvement rather than calloused indifference can prevail. Many people can express concern, but are not equipped to know what to do about that concern or how to translate that into action. The pastor who takes the time to inform and educate people is multiplying his/her ministry as congregational

members involve themselves in identification and intervention. These people are interpreting the love of God to others through their concern which opens the door for the transformation process to be set in motion. The hermeneutical task begins at the congregational level.

Secondly, people and pastor can perform the hermeneutical task by modeling a transformed lifestyle for the world in which they live. In relationship to the problem of alcoholism, this does not mean that total abstention on the part of people and pastor becomes the norm. Rather, it is modeling a concern and sensitivity to people who are afflicted with alcoholism as well as modeling for the world that fellowship and fun can be experienced apart from the use of alcohol just as well as with alcohol. By conforming to the social norm of drinking as the only way one can enjoy life is to aid and abet the deeply ingrained social assumption system. At social gatherings people can be given a choice of beverages and need not feel coerced or pressured into drinking alcoholic beverages. This may at first appear to be an insignificant action, but it witnesses strongly to the fact that life without chemicals is possible.

Thirdly, people and pastor can interpret for the world the nature of the Gospel as the transforming power in life. Timidity is not a virtue in ministry. Some of the most significant ministry in alcoholism took place when members of the parish forfeited their anonymity and shared with not only the congregation, but the entire community that transformation, recovery and hope are possible. As the community saw these transformed lives and the acceptance which these people experienced within the worshipping community, a powerful lure

towards the church as an instrument of God's grace and acceptance was established. The hermeneutical task is accomplished through actions which speak louder than words. As the church becomes the redemptive community in the world, the world can be attracted to the church as offering a power and a peace which the world cannot give.

The pastor himself/herself can be instrumental as a community leader in accomplishing the interpretive task in what s/he says and does. In many communities, pastors still have the opportunity to address others besides those in their congregations on various issues including the church's relationship to the alcoholic and family. It seems judicious that pastors aggressively seize such opportunities to interpret to the wider community the nature of the church, its posture and its ministry of transformation with alcoholics and their families. On numerous occasions when the opportunity has come to this writer to speak, people would gather after the presentation to share their life experiences with alcoholism and seek counsel as to ways they could become involved in this process of recovery and transformation.

The pastor's ministry of transformation is on a multi-dimensional level. From the individuals and families within the parish to the extended community and the wider context of society and the world, the pastor assumes a leadership role in facilitating a reconciling and liberating ministry. A vision of hope is lifted up under the symbol of the cross as the pastor serves as the theological interpreter of human experience and engages in a ministry of transformation and prevention through exercising his/her pastoral, priestly and prophetic role.

CONCLUSION

The focus of this dissertation has been to concentrate on the theological and psychological dynamics of transformation in the recovery process and thereby add to the building of theory in working with the alcoholic and family, particularly from the pastoral perspective. The dissertation was designed to discuss five major questions related to the transformation process. Each part sought to deal comprehensively with these questions from a particular perspective.

The result of such an endeavor has been a greater appreciation for the multi-faceted dimensions and perspectives on alcoholism. Approaching the issue from a systems perspective and utilizing the available resources in theology and the social sciences has enabled me to synthesize and process the material eclectically. The comprehensive approach is the only really viable way to consider the transformation process since it holistically addresses the totality of the human being and the human social network. The pastor is in a unique and strategic position by virtue of training, vocation, and accessibility to play a key role in this process. S/he brings to this kind of ministry the holistic credentials to function effectively as an instrument of God's grace for the alcoholic and his/her family system as well as being a strong voice in the area of social and cultural transformation. Utilizing the resources of theology, the social sciences and the paradigm of recovery in the self-help groups, the informed and involved pastor has an exciting and viable ministry. The goal of the dissertation was to present a comprehensive gestalt of the psycho-social-spiritual dynamics of the transformation process for the

family system. A summary of the theoretical learning, practical application of theory and suggestions for additional study comprise this conclusion.

A. THEORETICAL LEARNING

1. Transformation Is a Psycho-Social-Spiritual Process

A processive rather than a punctilior understanding of transformation in the recovery from alcoholism provides the most useful perspective. The components of past, present and future are integrated into the continuing experience. The past provides the remembrance of pain and the reality of where the person has been. It also serves as a necessary incubation period without which motivation for change likely would not have come. The present provides the time matrix for intervention and the future becomes as a vision of new hope and renewed life. Transformation is not instantaneous, but requires evolutionary time to begin and continue as an ongoing process. Alcoholics and family members grow at varying rates, therefore it is impossible to provide a general norm to measure the progress. Likewise, there are intervals of regression in the process which witnesses to its dynamic character rather than being a sequential evolution of development from one plateau to another. The transformation process is not in essence come to an end because the person is always in the state of becoming.

2. Transformation Is a Gift of Grace Appropriated in Faith

This truth emphasizes the fact that the initiative for

transformation is with God. Whether God is overtly recognized as the giver or not by the person involved is not the primary issue. The pastoral perspective of faith acknowledges God as the One who alone can transform the lives of people. This is a theological reality which cannot be empirically proven, but is appropriated in faith. God has done for the alcoholic and/or family member what s/he could not do for himself/herself. In the growth and maturation process most alcoholics and families come to acknowledge this truth in retrospect. This provides a firm foundation for their lives and for their witness within the context of the community of faith. The gift of grace is responsibly appropriated by each person and family unit in their lives.

3. Transformation as a Process Is Usually Aided by Crisis

Crisis, whether developmental, accidental or contrived; is the axis upon which the transformation process turns. Developmentally the progression of the disease takes its own toll and either the alcoholic or family member will suffer from the cumulative effects of its impact and seek assistance from outside of himself/herself. The crisis may occur situationally or accidentally. The alcoholic may be involved in an automobile mishap or be arrested for drunken driving or disorderly conduct. Such crises may be the precipitating factor in prompting the person to seek help with the situation. The crisis may be planned or contrived by members of the family and significant other persons as a way of communicating to the alcoholic the seriousness of his/her situation. A well planned intervention constitutes a crisis of significant proportions for many alcoholics that they are willing to seek treatment as a result.

4. Transformation Involves a Significant 'Turning Point' in the Process

Even though transformation is processive, there is for each alcoholic and/or family member a significant 'turning point.' This is most often precipitated by the crisis which has been experienced. The 'turning point' is that chaitotic moment when the alcoholic 'surrenders' to his/her problem as being unmanageable and out of control. This moment involves the admission of powerlessness over the addictive cycle. The same dynamic is operative in the family or significant other person(s) in the alcoholic's life. Surrender involves release of one's self to the care of God and the acknowledgement of defeat and a crushing of the big Ego to use Tiebout's terminology. The family system likewise experiences a 'turning point' when it gives up the attempt at control over the alcoholic and his/her drinking and commends the alcoholic and the family system to the care of God.

In this process there is for the alcoholic and family a kind of 'Aha' experience of insight when the release comes. This may evolve over a long period of time and may not even be fully acknowledged when it occurs to the alcoholic or the family member. There is an intuitive if not conscious awareness that victory comes only through admission of defeat and powerlessness. This moment of awareness has been called 'conversion' by Tiebout and may happen dramatically rather than an evolutionary dawning awareness. Numerous instances have been documented whereby the alcoholic has a dramatic awareness that this is the chaitotic moment. It has been variously described as sensing the

presence of God, the sudden flashing of light accompanied by a glow of warmth and peace.

The issue at stake is not developmental versus dramatic insight or conversion, but an acknowledgement that the process involves both experiences. The important consideration is that the process is set in motion so that transformation can occur.

5. Transformation Is an Experience of Law and Gospel

Transformation is not only an expression of the theological dialectic of law and Gospel, but is an experience of the same in the life of the alcoholic. Psychologically the alcoholic is ensconced and entrenched behind thick walls and barriers of denial and other defense mechanisms which serve to protect his/her self-contained and egocentric world. Bombardment of such defenses by judgmentalism and moralism serves only to fortify the position of the alcoholic. Penetration of the complex defense system from the outside is unsuccessful, the walls must be penetrated from the inside. This in essence means that self-conviction and self-indictment is the key in the process. Theologically this is the function of the law in one of its purposes, to self-convict and self-indict. This awareness leads to genuine inward surrender rather than outward compliance.

In the admission of defeat by self-indictment and conviction, there is given the victory over self which bursts the bonds of the addictive cycle and frees the person to be what s/he was created to be. This is the essence of the Gospel. The 'good news' is that the person is now free from the chains of the addictive cycle whether as

practicing alcoholic or family member. The physiological consequences of addiction must be attended to as the body withdraws from the chemical. The psychological and spiritual addiction is broken by the in-breaking of the Gospel that there is new life, there is freedom as one is loved and led by the Spirit of God.

6. Transformation Is an Experience of Death and Resurrection

The law-Gospel hermeneutic is informative of the theological process of transformation. The death-resurrection motif and experience witnesses to the radical nature of the change. Alcoholics frequently use such metaphors in explicating the transformation process as they perceive and experience it. The alcoholic and the family system were involved in a spiraling downward whirlpool. The intensity of the centripetal force increased as the disease progressed. Physical death for the alcoholic is a constant danger, death of relationships and the family system a seeming inevitability. The alcoholic and family system were in peril of viewing existence as a living death, entrapped and entombed in the vicious and often violent clutches of the alcoholic syndrome.

When there is redemption and release from this destructive cycle, it has the character of new life, of resurrection. The biblical images explicated in chapter nine are metaphors frequently employed by recovering alcoholics and their families. They have moved from death to life, from darkness to light. This is something other than an apocatastasis or restoration to what once was, it is more than a release of potential and possibilities. It is a dynamic and explosive

newness, a resurrected life or lives who have a new perspective on life and all of reality.

7. Transformation Involves a Radical Reversal in Lifestyle

The dynamic quality of freshness and newness involves a radical shift in lifestyle. This radical shift involves not only the alcoholic, but the family system as well.

The old system of destructive games, actions and relationships must go and a new system of relating take its place. Revisions, revampings and readjustments are made which are representative and reflective of the new way of life. The new life involves a new way of looking at persons as people rather than as problems. Persons are seen theologically as fellow creatures created by God in God's image and as such to be treated as related to as human beings with dignity and respect.

Transformation also involves a radical reversal in relating to the social system and the world outside of the family. People and places which were formerly frequented and which were constituted upon and centered around drinking are relinquished. The new start involves rearranging priorities, purposely altering one's social world and intentionally seeking an abstinent peer group identity. For most people this involves affiliation with the self-help groups of A.A. and Al-Anon, but the sensitive and perceptive pastor and community of faith can also provide an important matrix of social support.

The life of sobriety carries with it continual challenges for change and a radical reversal in establishing priorities and

perspectives for living. It can be envisioned as embarking on a new adventure with all of the excitement and enthusiasm which that entails. It is a commitment on the part of the alcoholic and family to life which under grace becomes a potential and probable reality.

8. Transformation Includes the Dynamics of Discontinuity and Continuity

An important theoretical learning concerning transformation is the dialectical reality of discontinuity and continuity. The dimension of discontinuity has been delineated in the last two points with the emphasis upon the transformation dynamic as that of death and resurrection as well as the reality of realizing the necessity of a radical reversal in life-style.

The dynamic of continuity is noted in that the alcoholic and his/her family members are still human beings, subject to the exigencies, experiences and existential encounters common to the human race. Dialectically they are both the same and also new or expressed in theological terminology they are simul justus et peccator. The confessional posture of traditional Lutheran anthropology is informative and incisive as well as determinative and decisive in informing the pastoral understanding of the transformation process. Significant and radical reversal in behavior, perspective and social process is anticipated as part of the new life, but an expectation of the alcoholic or family members to become paragons of virtue, a family system devoid of difficulties or exemplary models of life lived to perfection is neither realistic nor healthy.

Unrealistic expectations falls under the rubric of the law

whereby the new life is achieved by living in conformity to a given set of expectations and rules with sobriety as the reward. Theologically this kind of works righteousness under the law is certain to jeopardize sobriety. The message of justification is that the person is forgiven and reconciled apart from the law and is enjoined to live responsibly and responsively under the Gospel. This is the gift of freedom which the alcoholic and family request and require for their sanity and serenity.

Thus there is a radical reversal in attitude and approach to life with the necessary concomitant responsible and responsive changes, but the new life under the Gospel is not made into a new law, but rather is appropriated in freedom. The dynamics of discontinuity and continuity is a critical component in the pastor's theoretical understanding of transformation.

9. Transformation Involves Experiencing Sobriety With Serenity

Frequent reference has been made throughout the dissertation to the effect that eliminating the alcohol from the scene is not sufficient to experience the ultimate gift of transformation which is sobriety with serenity. The dis-ease of alcoholism in transformation gives way to comfortable living with oneself, others and one's God. Thus elimination of the chemical substance is but the first step in the process. The task of living comfortably without the anesthetizing effects of alcohol is the challenge for the alcoholic. Living comfortably with the alcoholic's new found sobriety is the challenge for the family. Families often walk on the proverbial egg shells in

relationship to the alcoholic following treatment. There can be no serenity in the family with the pervasive atmosphere of uncertainty permeating the family system.

As the alcoholic and family learn the art of daily turning themselves over to the care of God, the uncertainty and anxiety diminish and are supplanted with a new kind of trust and security which creatively lends itself to confident and serene living even in the midst of the chaos and confusion of the world. It is a kind of peace which the world cannot give and passes all human understanding. It is a peace which cannot be analyzed, but which is accepted; not empirically verifiable, but experientially validated by living in it and through it.

10. Transformation Implies Continued Maturation and Growth as a Person

The radical change in lifestyle, attitude and approach to living is not the end of the process. Alcoholics and family members continue to grow in self-understanding, interpersonal relationships and social consciousness as they appropriate the gift of transformation in their lives. The alcoholic finds a new identity as a person with potential rather than a drunk destined for destruction. As a consequence there is growth in relationship to God, others and himself/herself. Succinctly stated, the alcoholic learns what it means to be truly human. S/he comes alive and with each day and every encounter there is an ever expanding awareness of purpose for living.

Alcoholics begin to branch out, participate in projects, capitalize on their capabilities and with continued maturation and growth become less concerned with their anonymity and more concerned

with using their experience to be of help to others. They seek to increase their conscious contact with God through prayer and meditation and translate their experience of God's love by loving others.

Family members likewise continue to grow and mature. The shame and embarrassment of having an alcoholic in the family is transformed into joy and celebration not only that the one lost has found himself/herself, but that each family member is again in touch with themselves and the family system. Involvement with others becomes an integral part of their lives which now interfaces with other recovering families as well as becoming healthily interdependent upon a wider community of support.

The alcoholic and the family members demonstrate a willingness to connect with others who are still trapped in the addictive cycle and are willing not only to involve, but invest themselves on behalf of others. Growth and maturation can be measured by the amount of time they devote to talking about health and involvement with others as opposed to talking about their illness and isolation from other people.

Theologically transformation involves people in sanctification, that is, living the new life in the Spirit and being energized towards health, wholeness and an abundant life under God. The sensitivity to the plight and pain of others is increased and the awareness of being part of the total family of humankind is accepted and acknowledged.

11. Transformation Is an Expression of Mystery

An exhaustive treatment of transformation is an impossibility because it involves the mysterious working of God with and within human

beings. God's working in the transformation process is varied depending upon the person and as such defies empirical explication and mathematical measurement. One observes and to some extent participates in the process as a pastor, yet its importance and impact defies the constrictive categories of human description. Unless one has personally experienced the process of transformation as an alcoholic or family member, the process likely cannot be fully appreciated. From the Christian perspective Woodruff writes,

The authorities on Christian conversion in alcoholism are not scholars and writers. They are the persons who have been 'to hell and back' in alcoholism, and who know what conversion means to them as despairing selves.¹

Theologically, the transformation process is operative in all who claim discipleship and are baptized into the death of Christ as it were, but the alcoholic and family members claim a unique experience of transformation shrouded in the mysterious nature of the disease and the mysterious working of God or a 'Higher Power' in the very fabric of their being. They affirm that God continues to mysteriously, but affirmatively work in their lives bringing about continued growth and change.

B. PRACTICAL LEARNING

The theoretical learning informs and impacts the practical learning from such a study. A summary of the salient features for pastoral care and counseling of the alcoholic and family in relationship to the transformation process would include the following

¹C. Roy Woodruff, Alcoholism and Christian Experience (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1968) 20-21.

considerations.

1. The Necessity of Pastoral Self-Awareness

While it is universally true that the pastor who provides care and counseling needs to be aware of himself/herself, it is particularly critical in working with alcoholics and their family members. This includes initially being aware of one's personal attitudes, dispositions and reactions to alcoholics and their families. The spectrum of attitudes can range from judgmentalism, moralism, patronizing to avoidance and disgust. Before involving oneself pastorally, one needs to candidly and honestly face his/her own attitudes about alcohol, alcoholism and alcoholics and their families. The personal position of the pastor will determine pastoral effectiveness with the people.

One's personal position usually determines one's professional position as well. Once again self-awareness is most critical. A determination of one's intent to work with alcoholics and their families as a pastor implies the extent of involvement. Involvement in the transformation process is time consuming and a professional determination with respect to pastoral time apportionment needs to be made in ordering pastoral priorities. The personal and professional awareness implies also a theological awareness which the pastor has of himself/herself. What images govern the pastor's understanding of human beings, ministry, the church, sin, health, healing and salvation are but a few of the theological issues. All dimensions of the pastor's being, both intellectual and affective as well as spiritual are consciously concretized so as to operate with a maximum amount of

self-awareness.

2. The Necessity of Accurate Data and Information

Effective and efficient work with alcoholics and families involved in the transformation process is contingent on accurate psycho-social-theological data and information. Myths and misguided zeal muddy the waters of pastoral counseling and care and can exacerbate rather than aid in alleviating the problems of alcoholism. The pastor professionally meshes theory and praxis of ministry. Accurate data and information results in informed practice.

3. The Realization and Acceptance of Failure

The informed pastor realizes and knows that working with alcoholics and their families can be frustrating and often times seemingly futile. Assuming responsibility for the transformation process is neither theologically nor practically tenable. God exercises the initiative, the pastor can be instrumental in the process, but ultimately the responsibility for accepting or rejection lies with the alcoholic and/or family member. A multiplicity of factors are involved. The incubation period may not be of sufficient duration, the pleasure and benefits of drinking outweigh the pain and bane or sufficient cognizance of all the factors which comprise the dynamics of the family system have not been addressed. Whatever the reason, the informed pastor recognizes that efforts at being instrumental in facilitating the transformation process may end in

failure. The pastor needs to not only be cognizant, but accepting of that reality.

4. The Importance of Timing

As already alluded to in the last point, the informed pastor needs to develop a sensitivity for the chairetic moment when intervention appears to be most appropriate. Knowledge of the family system, the approximate progression of the disease and the dynamic factors currently operating aid in determining the most judicious moment for intervention. There are no textbook guidelines for determination of that moment, it is intuitively perceived with experience as a pastor.

5. The Necessity of Dealing With the Family System

The most recent literature in the field emphasizes the fact that alcoholism is a family disease. If the alcoholic has not family, then working with the significant other people who impact his/her life becomes the focus of attention. The pastor is in an excellent position to work with the family system, to observe each individual's response and reaction to the disease. Knowledge of family systems theory and the dynamics of group process are helpful tools in involving oneself pastorally in the transformation process of the social system.

6. The Awareness of the Functional Role

The eleventh chapter delineated in detail the multi-functional

role of the pastor as catalyst, correlator, coordinator, confessor, and conciliator. Each one of these roles is critical instrumentally as the pastor works with the dynamics of transformation in the alcoholic and family system. As spiritual guide and leader s/he need not apologize for this multiple role, but aggressively engage himself/herself in those various areas of concern.

7. The Importance of Interpreting and Translating Theologically

The pastor is uniquely equipped to interpret and translate theologically the transformation process by providing nomenclature for what is transpiring. The language of faith must interpenetrate with the language of the social sciences to provide credence and credibility for the process. The feeling, fact, faith dimensions dare not be devisive, but rather through concentrated and concerted effort brought to focus on the family system. The pastor is in a strategic position to accomplish this task.

The pastor likewise can interpret and translate the reality and dynamics of transformation to the community of faith as well as the wider community of the human family as s/he works pastorally with aicoholics and their families.

8. The Necessity of a Cooperative Posture with Respect to Other Healing Agents

Practically speaking the pastor cannot be singularly involved in this process. S/he has neither the time, energy, stamina, skills or resources to be the sole facilitator. Seeing oneself as a member of a

total healing team which may include the staff of a treatment center, mental health professionals, physicians and self-help groups is imperative. Alcoholism is a family and social disease, comprised of complex physiological, psychological, social and spiritual factors. The need is to learn and work as part of that total team.

9. The Importance of Engaging in Preventative Ministry

The focus of attention in the past has been primarily intervention and treatment of the alcoholic and family. This dimension of work will continue to be an important component of pastoral care and counseling in the future. Perhaps the pastoral key in prevention is equipping and enabling the community of faith to be the locus of redemptive transformation in its ongoing ministry of reconciliation, relationships and renewal. Communities of faith which function as living organisms and expressions of redemptive love and acceptance diminish the sense of alienation and estrangement. Communities exhibiting the character of caring invite people to invest in people rather than chemicals. The self-help groups of A.A., Alanon, Alateen and Alatot are vivid demonstrations of and viable examples of what a social network of support can mean in the recovery process. It seems logical to assume that such a social network of support could in large part preclude turning to alcohol as one's source of solace if people were open and available before the alcohol was sought as a resource. Community building may be the pastor's most important priority as a preventative measure for a multiplicity of ills besides alcoholism.

Some prevention is accomplished through education, discussion of

issues, values clarification and ethical implications of human behavior. Foundational education with regard to who God is, God's purpose for people and the world provides a healthy theology which encourages a healthy view of oneself and others as human beings. Exposure to the traditions, liturgy, rituals and rites of the church and their meaning for daily life aid in providing a nexus of meanings and purpose in life as related to God and the rest of the human race.

There are a multiplicity of possibilities for the pastor who is in a strategic position by virtue of his/her office, training and knowledge of people entrusted to his/her pastoral care. Implementation of the aforementioned practical learnings will result in more effective ministry and improved instrumental involvement in the transformation process of recovery from alcoholism.

C. ISSUES FOR CONTINUED STUDY

The scope and intent of this dissertation has been comprehensive in nature in attempting to present a multi-dimensional and integrative model of understanding transformation. Furthermore, its specific intent and purpose was to present a paradigm of recovery which the parish pastor might find theologically and practically viable for his/her ministry. Testing the theories and learnings would be extremely difficult because of the nature of the topic. However, further and continued study would be fruitful if one could conduct a longitudinal study which would be protracted over a number of years.

One approach would be to study a given number of alcoholics and their families and determine the dynamics of the disease as it came to

expression in that family system, the mode of intervention and the consequent evidence of transformation in a five year period following the cessation of drinking and the completion of family treatment. Such a study might reveal the operation of dynamics other than those dealt with in this dissertation, provide information and data with regard to perceived change in family relating and relationships and give a profile of that family's self-perception at the time of intervention, the intervening years and its perception after a five year period.

A second approach might be selecting a number of congregations which have a specialized ministry to chemically dependent people and whose community of faith appears to be not only attractive, but effective in providing a social matrix which alcoholics find meaningful. A profile of the attitudes and activities which these congregations exhibit and are engaged in could yield critically important information for shaping and structuring community life which would be salutary for alcoholics and their families.

A third approach for further study in the dynamics of transformation would be studying the pastor himself/herself. Determination of several parish pastors who have worked most effectively with chemically dependent people and their families would be gathered. From a synthesis of their responses to questions which focus on their role in the transformation process; it is possible that a personal, professional and theological profile might emerge which would identify those characteristics and personal traits which seem most valuable in being a facilitator of transformation for the family system.

Three wide-sweeping and comprehensive suggestions have been made

as a possibility for further study of the process. There are also specific components of the process which might prove fruitful in future study.

A study of parental attitudes towards infants who later become alcoholic would be an intriguing investigation into the environmental effects of parenting on future development of alcoholism. A study of any of the early categories of crisis experience and resolution in the Eriksonian schema of epigenesis could reveal common experiences or factors in those transitional developmental stages which create a possible proclivity for the development of alcoholism.

A comparison of denominational attitudes towards alcohol, alcoholism and alcoholics based on official statements by church bodies might reveal a correlation between the religious or theological mindset of that group of people and the development of the disease. The question would focus around whether theology and polity have an impact on people in the church who develop alcoholism and the manner in which that posture inhibits or encourages the transformation process.

Further study could profitably be made with regard to the various functional roles which the pastor plays in relationship to the alcoholic and family in the transformation process. These roles emerge as being most important in a developing theology of ministry and pastoral care.

The final word on the transformation process will never be written because those who work with the alcoholics and their families are also in the process of becoming. The transformation process dealt with in this dissertation appears to be the most useful paradigm for the pastor because it is a psycho-social-spiritual approach. Its

success has been demonstrated in the thousands and millions of lives which have been saved from the ravages of alcoholism. Its cogency is based on sound psychological, sociological and theological principles which can be explicated in an integrated fashion and implemented in a holistic approach. The result is a transformed life and transformed lives in the family system. As a pastor it is a satisfying and gratifying experience to participate in and celebrate the transformation of people's lives from death to new life.

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